

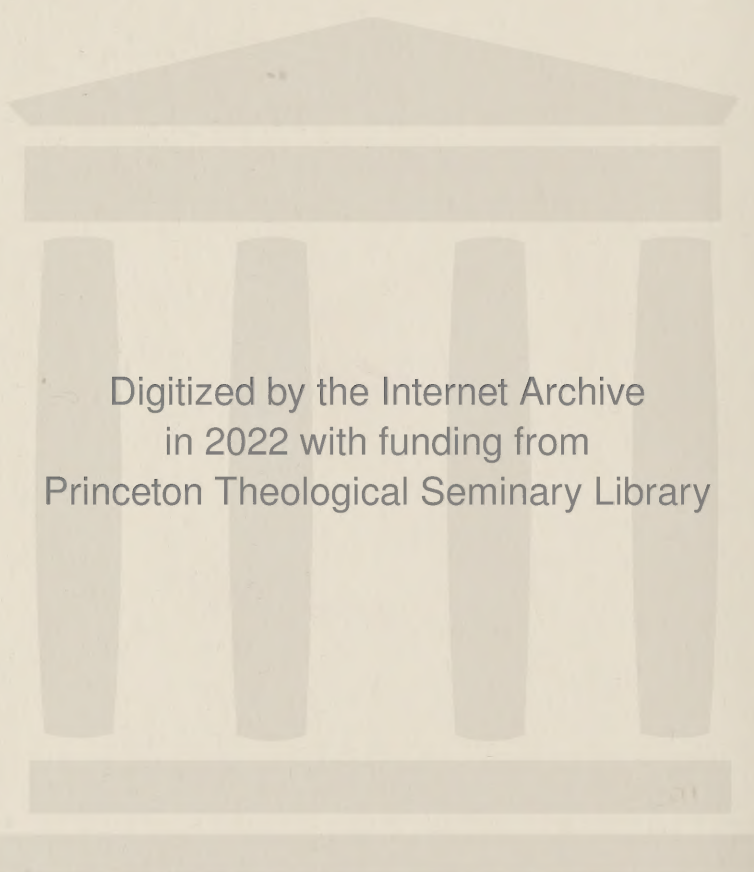






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# PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS

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## Literary Notices.

*A Plea for the Ways of God to Man; being an attempt to vindicate the Moral Government of the World. By Wm. Fleming, D.D., Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Glasgow. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 38, George-street. Belfast: C. Aitchison, 9, High-street. 1858.*

THIS volume was to have been dedicated to the late Dr. Macfarlane, the esteemed Principal of the Glasgow University; it is now inscribed to his memory. The author's general object is indicated in the title of his book, namely, to bring together a number of arguments, chiefly, though not exclusively, philosophical, tending to vindicate the rectitude and wisdom of the Divine government against objections drawn from the apparent anomalies, and inequalities, of our present state of being. The grand question of the origin of evil meets us here at the outset, and Dr. Fleming takes it up under three aspects—viz., metaphysical evil, or created imperfection; physical evil, or suffering and pain; and moral evil, or disobedience to the Divine law. Having considered the essential nature of these varieties of evil, the author discusses at length the "evidences and measures of moral government" in the world, the "extent and efficacy" of the latter, showing its consistency with the irregularities observable in the experiences of the wicked and the righteous respectively, together with the valuable ends frequently answered by the seeming anomalies alluded to. He concludes the whole work with an instructive chapter on the "hereditary principle in moral government," meaning the transmission of penal suffering to subsequent generations in consequence of the vices of their predecessors. This volume is remarkable for judicious, sober thought, and especially for its practical tendency, the author uniformly appealing to the authority of the sacred volume, whenever its deliverances bear upon the matter of his inquiries. If Dr. Fleming has not advanced anything very new, or very original, he has at least avoided that rash and perilous speculation, in which certain classes of writers have sometimes indulged, and he has produced a hand-book of sound philosophy, which may be studied with pleasure, as well as with profit, by all who take an interest in this department of investigation. Far more difficulty has been felt, or pretended, in relation to the existence of evil than any which really belongs to the question, so far as the subsisting order of the universe is concerned, provided only that we take into account the doctrine of a future life in which a compensative economy will prevail. It is at this point that Dr. Fleming terminates his researches, and this is exactly the point at which the absolute difficulty begins to be felt. A future state, on the hypothesis stated, reconciles all the contradictions, and explains all the irregularities, which startle men who look only at the surface of human events; but it is the perpetuity of evil, and its coeval punishment in the next life, which occasion the perplexity complained of by the loftiest minds that have studied the question, and Dr. Fleming has never touched this cardinal point in any shape or form whatsoever. Eternal sin, and eternal suffering, are, in their essential nature, ultimate evils, admitting of no after compensation, and a "theodicea," which ignores this fundamental inquiry, is a veritable representation of Hamlet with Hamlet's part expunged! Dr. Fleming's book is exceedingly good, so far as it goes; but still, it labours under the primary defect alluded to, and, however praiseworthy as a partial contribution, it is itself a "metaphysical evil" of considerable magnitude, relatively to the comprehensive question with which it professes to deal. The present state of being is but a very small portion of the Divine economy, and every one who understands the question must perceive that our author, by merely shifting the difficulty out of time into eternity, leaves wholly unanswered the epicurean dilemma which, in the very first page of his dissertation, he had proposed to remove out of the way! The work, as we have said, is excellent so far as it goes, but the author has advanced only to the threshold of the inquiry undertaken, and, however meritorious his labours may be within a limited sphere, the great crucial problem connected with the existence of evil still remains to be solved. It is a mistake to imagine that this problem belongs solely to revealed theology, since the discoveries of the latter are entirely in harmony with the deductions of intellectual and ethical science, and, consequently, to some extent within its province.





A

PLEA FOR THE WAYS OF GOD  
TO MAN :

BEING

AN ATTEMPT TO VINDICATE

THE

MORAL GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD.

BY

WILLIAM FLEMING, D.D.,

PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW.

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THIS SMALL BOOK ON A GREAT SUBJECT  
WAS TO HAVE BEEN DEDICATED,  
WITH HIS CONSENT,  
TO THE  
VERY REVEREND DUNCAN MACFARLAN, D.D.,  
PRINCIPAL OF THE COLLEGE OF GLASGOW, ETC., ETC.,  
IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF  
LONG-CONTINUED FRIENDSHIP.  
IT IS NOW MOST RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY  
INSCRIBED TO HIS MEMORY,  
BY THE AUTHOR.

*The College, Glasgow,  
January, 1858.*



## P R E F A C E .

---

THE objections which a Theodicy should meet are—

1. The existence of Physical Evil, as contrary to the Goodness of God. 2. The existence of Moral Evil, as contrary to the Holiness of God. 3. The disproportion between the crimes and the punishments of this life, as repugnant to His Justice.

What follows is not to be regarded as a formal attempt to construct such a work. It is the result of a somewhat varied course of reading and reflection on the difficulties with which a Theodicy has to contend. The views advanced are plain and practical; but to some minds they may prove not less impressive than more ambitious and abstruse speculations. Of such there is no lack to those who like them; for the master spirits of every age, and of every country, have tried their strength in wrestling with difficulties which it is here sought to alleviate, since they cannot be



altogether taken out of the way. Both Reason and Scripture have been appealed to, since there is no discrepance between them : And Philosophy is not complete but in Theology ; when it seeks to irradiate its dark places by turning to the Fountain of Light, and to sustain the feeble and the finite, by leaning on Infinite Power and Absolute Goodness.

THE COLLEGE, GLASGOW,  
*January, 1858.*

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## INTRODUCTION.

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DIFFICULTIES regarding the wisdom and goodness, and the holiness and justice of the Deity, arise chiefly from the fact, that there is evil in the world. This fact has been the *crux philosophorum* from the earliest ages; and in all nations, the question, Whence cometh evil? has been anxiously asked and doubtfully answered. We learn from Lactantius<sup>1</sup> (*De Irâ Dei*, cap. 3), that the difficulty arising from the existence of evil was put by Epicurus, in the form of a dilemma, as follows:

God either has the will, and wants the power, to prevent evil; or, He has the power and wants the will; or, He has neither the will nor the power to do so.

If He has the will, and wants the power, He is

<sup>1</sup> The Epicurean objection may also be found in Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, Lib. V., v. 195.

It is fully stated by Cudworth, in his '*True Intellectual System*,' pp. 78, 79.

An answer is given to it by Archbishop King, in his '*Essay on the Origin of Evil*,' chap. v., sect. 5, subs. 7.

weak; if He has the power, and wants the will, He is malignant; if He has neither the will nor the power, He is both malignant and weak.

But, if He has both the will and the power to prevent evil, which is the only supposition compatible with our idea of Deity, whence cometh evil? or, why is it not removed from among His works?

The dilemma, as thus constructed, bears most directly against the power and the goodness of God. But it is plain, that it is equally incompatible with our idea of Deity, to suppose Him wanting in wisdom, to devise the means of preventing or removing evil, as wanting in power or goodness to do so. And, with the view of obviating the difficulties regarding the wisdom and goodness, and the justice and holiness of God, it is proposed to consider the questions concerning the nature and origin of evil.

By theologians and philosophers, evil has been distinguished as *Metaphysical*, *Physical*, and *Moral*. Many, if not all, of the difficulties regarding the wisdom and goodness, and the justice and holiness of God, may be considered, under one or other of these heads: for it will be found that they arise, either from the limited and imperfect nature of all created beings, or from the pains and sufferings of the present life, or from the moral disorder and confusion to be found in it.

# THEODICY.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### OF METAPHYSICAL EVIL.

THE phrase Metaphysical Evil is negative, rather than positive, in its signification. It means the absence or defect of powers and capacities, and the consequent want of the higher enjoyment, which might have flowed from the full and perfect possession of them. It denotes the fact, that of the sentient and living beings whom God hath created, the nature given to them is imperfect, the endowments of that nature are limited, and the condition of those beings less capable of enjoyment, and actually less happy, than it might have been. And the difficulty started is, Can it be consistent with the wisdom and goodness of God, to have created beings capable only of a lower amount of enjoyment, when He might have made them capable of a higher, or, as it is alleged, capable of the very highest?

With the view of obviating this difficulty, the following remarks are arranged so as to meet the different forms which the difficulty assumes.



## SECTION I.

*Might not God have made His creatures altogether free from limitation and defect?*

To the difficulty, when urged in this form, the answer is: That it is, in the nature of things, impossible that created beings can be altogether free from limitation and defect. Limitation enters into the idea of a creature, as essentially as absolute perfection enters into the idea of the Creator. By its very name and nature, a created being cannot be self-existent or self-sufficient. All its powers and possessions and enjoyments must be derived, either immediately from the Creator, or from the sources which He has opened up, and by the means which He has supplied. And, although a created being were exposed to no positive evil, to no pain, nor even to the interruption or cessation of enjoyment, he must still have a sense of dependence, the feeling that his existence and its enjoyments are not inherent, nor self-originated, but derived and communicated; so that it may be, in the strict and proper sense of the words, *absolutely impossible*, to create any being without limitation, or without dependence, and a sense of it.

It was infinite and overflowing goodness which moved God to create ; because, that happiness which He enjoyed in Himself, could not have been communicated or diffused, till beings capable of happiness were created. But even infinite Power cannot create beings who shall be infinite in their capacities of enjoyment. Unless God, therefore, had restrained His benevolence, and refrained from manifesting His power and wisdom by the works of creation, what has been called metaphysical evil, or evil of limitation, or defect, must have had place. To call for its exclusion, is to call for the extinction of the works of creation, and the suppression of the overflowings of the Divine benevolence. In giving birth to being, God gave, and could not but give, bounds to that being. That which is created only exists, and can only exist, within bounds.<sup>1</sup> In this sense, it must be limited and imperfect. That it has being and a certain degree of perfection, is, because God willed it. That it has not boundless being and absolute perfection, is, because it is not God and cannot be equal to Him. In this view of it, what has been called metaphysical evil, is a mere negation or non-entity ; and instead of being spoken of as something positive, and produced as an objection to the goodness of God, it should rather be regarded as the only condition under which beings could be created, or

<sup>1</sup> ' There's nothing situate under Heaven's eye,

But hath its bounds in earth, in sea, in sky.'—*Shakespeare*.

could receive any or all manifestations of the Divine benevolence. In making any vessel, it must be made of some certain size; otherwise it cannot be called a vessel, and can hold nothing. In order to the diffusion of that happiness, which He has within Himself, God created beings capable of enjoying it. In creating them, He must have given to them some definite nature, otherwise they would not have been capable of happiness. Without a definite nature, to which certain objects or ends are suited, there can be no enjoyment. Every created being is what he is, by having a certain definite nature; and he is made happy, by being put in possession of objects suited to that nature. So that limitation, or definiteness of nature, is inseparable from the existence of every created being, and essential to the enjoyment of any or of all happiness, by such a being. And what has been called metaphysical evil, and has been represented as a withholding or limiting of His goodness, on the part of God, is, in truth, the only condition under which that goodness can be diffused; and the fulfilling of that condition by the works of creation, should be regarded as the proof and effect of his unbounded benevolence. 'Limitation is not evil; otherwise, there would be no good but that which is infinite and absolute.'

Seeing, then, that all created beings are necessarily limited in their nature, the question comes to be, How can the wisdom and goodness of God be best mani-



fested towards them? Is it by creating only the highest order of beings, and by communicating to them at once the greatest happiness of which they are capable? or, By creating beings of different orders, and communicating happiness in various degrees? These, it has been thought, are the only two suppositions that can be made. And the consideration of them, under separate sections, will exhaust the topics which remain to be treated of in this chapter.

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## SECTION II.

*Would the wisdom and goodness of God have been best manifested, by creating only the highest order of beings, and communicating to them at once the greatest happiness of which they were capable?*

According to this supposition, all evil, but evil of imperfection, would have been excluded from the universe, and there would have been one uniform order of beings, enjoying the greatest happiness possible for creatures to enjoy. But this is a supposition which carries with it an apparent, if not a real, contradiction. According to it, the happiness of the universe could at no time admit of variation or in-

crease. This looks like setting limits to that which has none.

‘A triangle may be made as large as you please, yet the largest possible (conceivable) cannot be; for such a one could not be a triangle, which is a surface bounded with three straight lines. In like manner, we may, I apprehend, speak in relation to the happiness and perfection of the universe. God may make it as happy and as perfect as He pleases, and may continually increase this in any proportion He thinks fit; but still, I apprehend, ’tis capable of this increase, without limits, and without end; and that to suppose the greatest possible quantity of happiness or perfection diffused through it, is to suppose that there is a certain fixed and determinate quantity of happiness and perfection, beyond which it is impossible even for the power of God to proceed, which, I must own, seems to me absurd. So that to argue against the goodness of God, because there is not the greatest quantity of happiness and perfection in the universe, is to use an argument that can have no force, since, if put into form, one of the premises is unintelligible.’ — *Divine Benevolence; being an answer to a Pamphlet (by John Balguy) entitled, Divine Rectitude.* 8vo. Lond. 1731, p. 69.<sup>1</sup>

The fountains of the Divine wisdom and goodness

<sup>1</sup> ‘The author,’ says Dr Price (*Review of the Principal Questions, etc., in Morals*, 3d Edit., p. 429, Note), ‘was Mr Bayes, one of the most ingenious men I ever knew.’

are inexhaustible. In God, the ability to communicate happiness, and the means of doing so, can never fail. But to suppose that there should be at all times, throughout all the works of God, the highest possible amount of happiness actually enjoyed, is to set up bounds, beyond which neither the wisdom nor the goodness of God could go. And, for anything we can know, the supposition may be self-destructive; inasmuch as the perfect equality and uniformity among created beings, which it implies, may be incompatible with their highest happiness. Indeed, it is plain, that if all created beings were of one order, one pleasure must be denied to them, viz., the pleasure which arises from the contemplation of variety. Having all the same degree of perfection, there would be but one object of contemplation, and, they would all stand in the same respect or relation to one another, instead of the varied contemplations and the varied relations which different orders of beings might present to one another. So that this supposed state, if realized, would be defective as to one source of happiness enjoyed by created beings; and the most happy universe could not be a universe consisting of beings of the highest order, because they would be the *only* order.

Further--The supposition, that only the highest order of beings should be created, does not prove, but proceeds on, the impossibility of lower orders of creatures being called into existence, and of lower



measures of happiness being enjoyed. After the greatest possible number of the highest order of beings had been created and made happy, there would still be room for a lower order, capable of less happiness. And if the wisdom and goodness of God be infinite, why should not the gradation go down, from the very highest to the very lowest; each order of beings enjoying a happiness of its own, without interfering with the happiness of the other orders?

‘The most happy universe is not one that consists of the greatest possible number of the most happy beings only; but one that consists of that, and the greatest possible number of beings next inferior to the first rank, and so downward, till we come to those that approach the nearest to insensible matter. This certainly must be allowed, unless it can be proved that the greatest possible number of the most happy beings having been created, no others can possibly be made. So that a most happy universe is so far from being unbeautifully uniform, that it must be most beautifully various; a most regular and orderly advance of perfection being made from insensible matter, *without breaking the scale of beings*, quite up to the highest possible rank.’—*Divine Benevolence*, p. 73.

Finally—The supposition is one which derogates from our views both of the wisdom and the goodness of God. For, if only the highest order of beings had been called into existence, and the greatest happiness of which they were capable communicated to

them at once, there could have been no room to admire the wisdom of God, in devising so many various ways of communicating happiness to His creatures, as He has done. His goodness, too, upon this supposition, would have had the appearance of a blind mechanical impulse, operating to a certain definite extent, and in one unvaried way, instead of a moral disposition producing happiness, under the guidance of a wisdom, the resources of which are inexhaustible, and by the exertions of a power which is unbounded.

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### SECTION III.

*It is probable that the wisdom and goodness of God are better manifested by creating different orders of beings, and imparting different kinds or degrees of happiness, than if only one order of beings, even though that order had been the highest, had been created.*

In the world around us, we see that there are different orders of living beings, rising above one another, in the amount of their endowments, and in their capacity for enjoyment. And we see, further, that the existence and the enjoyment of one order form no hindrance to the existence and enjoyment of

the other orders. We cannot prove it ; but to many it has seemed probable, that the gradation which prevails here below, may extend higher in creation ; and that, as there is a gradual ascent from the lower orders of living beings up to man, so there may be, from man, a gradual ascent to higher orders of living beings, even to the highest that has been created. ‘That there should be more species of intelligent creatures above us, than there are of sensible and material below us, is probable to me,’ says Locke,<sup>1</sup> ‘from hence : that, in all the visible corporeal worlds, we see no chasms or gaps. All quite down from us, the descent is by easy steps, and a continued series of things, that, in each remove, differ very little from one another. And when we consider the infinite power and wisdom of the Maker, we have reason to think that it is suitable to the magnificent harmony of the universe, and the great design and infinite goodness of the Architect, that the species of creatures should also, by gentle degrees, descend to us downwards ; which, if it be probable, we have reason then to be persuaded that there are far more species of creatures above us, than there are beneath ; we being, in degrees of perfection, much more remote from the infinite being of God, than we are from the lowest state of being, and that which approaches nearest to nothing.’

<sup>1</sup> *Essay on Human Understanding*, Book III., Chap. vi., Sect. 12. See also the *Spectator*, No. 519.



‘Above, how high progressive life may go!  
Around, how wide! how deep extend below!  
Vast chain of being! which from God began,  
Natures ethereal, human, angel, man,  
Beast, bird, fish, insect, what no eye can see,  
No glass can reach; from infinite to Thee,  
From Thee to nothing.’—*Pope*.

The difference in the structure of the different parts of the material universe, may be said to call for different orders of beings to inhabit them. With regard to the physical constitution of other planets, or of other worlds, we cannot speak with much knowledge or certainty. But we know enough, to say of some of them, that they are not suited to be a habitation for the living beings that dwell on this earth. And, to confine our views to this earth, we can see, that it could not be fully replenished if there were only one order of living beings appointed to dwell on it. Its different elements and different climates are obviously fitted and designed for affording the means of life and enjoyment to different orders of beings; and, accordingly, every element and every climate have their appropriate inhabitants. ‘Multitudes of swift and brilliant creatures tread the sands of the southern zone; striped zebras and spotted leopards;’ while the frost-bitten regions of the north are traversed by the dull ox and the dark wolf. Even the cold ice is tenanted by the shaggy bear. The horse gallops across the plains, while the eagle builds his nest in the crags of the rock; the insect sports in the sun-

beam, while the leviathan takes his pastime in the mighty waters. In this way, all the departments of nature are full of varied life and enjoyment. 'The earth, O Lord, is full of Thy riches ; so is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. These all wait upon Thee, that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season. What thou givest them they gather. Thou openest Thine hand, they are filled with good.' —Ps. civ. 24. Now, if only one order of beings had been created, it is plain that much of this globe must have remained unoccupied, and void of life and enjoyment. It is probable, therefore, that, by the creation of different orders of beings, the amount of happiness is increased. The existence of the lower orders of beings is no diminution of the happiness of the higher. On the contrary, it contributes to its increase. If man had been the only living being belonging to this earth, his happiness, in so far as we can judge, instead of being increased, would probably have been diminished. If, therefore, that gradation in the order of beings, which prevails here below, extend in the same way upwards, it is plain that the capacity for happiness in the universe will be enlarged. And, if the capacity for happiness be enlarged, it is probable that the actual amount of happiness enjoyed, will be greater than it could have been, if, instead of this gradation and diversity of beings, fewer orders of beings, or only one order of beings, had been created.

If the sum of *good enjoyed* by each successive order of beings surpass the amount of *evil endured*, then the general happiness must be increased; because, while the higher orders enjoy their happiness, the lower orders enjoy theirs, without interfering with one another. And, for anything that can be said or shown to the contrary, there may be as many higher orders of beings created and made happy, as there would have been, although man and the lower animals, together with the earth which they inhabit, had found no place in creation. But, if creative power had stopped with the order of beings immediately above man, would not the sum of happiness in the universe have been diminished? or, if it had stopped with man, would it not have been diminished? In either case, sources of happiness not enjoyed, perhaps not capable of being enjoyed, by higher orders of beings, must have remained closed. And the opening of such sources of happiness, and the creating of beings capable of enjoying them, should be accepted as a proof of God's willingness to manifest His goodness as extensively as it is possible to do.

The fact, that the happiness which this earth can furnish is inferior, in kind and degree, or that the beings capable of enjoying it are beings of an inferior order, is no valid objection to the goodness of God. The fact, that the animals lower than man have been endowed with a certain nature, and placed in a state suited to that nature, is a proof that God designed

and made arrangements for their enjoyment. This proof is not destroyed by the fact, that He designed higher happiness for man, by endowing him with higher faculties, and placing him in a higher condition. Neither does the fact, that the faculties and condition of man are lower than those of angels, furnish a valid objection against the goodness of God, when it can be shown that the nature and condition of man are fitted to each other, and fitted to produce happiness. Our eye must not be evil because God is good. ‘No class,’ said Paley (*Nat. Theology*, chap. xxvi.), ‘can justly complain of the imperfections which belong to its place in the scale, unless it were allowable for it to complain, that a scale of being was appointed in nature; for which appointment there appear to be reasons of wisdom and goodness.’ Suppose such a complaint<sup>1</sup> listened and yielded to, the class of creatures complaining could only be raised in the scale of creation by some higher class being degraded. The class degraded might then be said to have acquired a double ground of complaining, both for restoration and for elevation. All the lower classes might complain that they were not the higher; the higher might complain that they were not the highest; and the highest might complain that they were not free from imperfection, and indepen-

<sup>1</sup> ‘Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?’—Rom. ix. 20, 21,



dent and self-sufficient, as the Creator. And all this, because God, in manifesting His goodness, has instituted a gradation of creatures, in order that every kind and degree of happiness may be enjoyed by them. It is no valid objection to such a scheme, that some creatures hold higher places than others; for subordination is essential to the very idea of it. But it would be a valid objection, if it could be shown that, upon the supposition of such a scheme, some classes of creatures hold places in the scale of creation, for which their faculties are not fitted,

“Where all must full or not coherent be,  
And all that rises, rise in due degree;  
Then, in the scale of reasoning life, ’tis plain  
There must be somewhere such a rank as man,  
And all the question (wrangle e’er so long)  
Is only this, if God has placed him wrong.”

—POPE, *Essay on Man*, Epist. I.

This cannot be shown with regard to man, or any of the classes of living beings here below. There is no ground for believing, that this earth could have furnished a suitable habitation for beings endowed with higher powers than those which belong to our species; but, it is admirably suited to a being like man, who may here find happiness in the exercise and improvement of his faculties. The animals below man seem all to be endowed with instincts and tendencies curiously adapted to the departments of nature which they occupy. And the conclusion to which a careful survey

of this earth should lead is, that the various orders of beings which inhabit it, are all filling that place in the scale of creation which properly belongs to them. Instead of any ground for complaining, that some beings are ill placed, or wrong placed, there is reason rather for admiring the boundless benevolence and the inexhaustible wisdom of Him who constituted so many different natures, and arranged so many various conditions for living beings, all capable of yielding happiness of some kind, and in some degree. Had there been only one order of beings capable of happiness, and only one condition capable of yielding it, there might have been room to doubt the extent of the Divine power, or to question the resources of the Divine wisdom. But when happiness has been diffused to such an amount, and in so many various ways, neither the goodness which prompted the mighty plan, nor the power and wisdom by which it has been carried out, can be impugned. The contemplation of creation, filled with so many orders of beings, so different in their nature and endowments, yet all so admirably adapted to the situations and circumstances in which they are found, full of activity and enjoyment, is a contemplation fitted to impress us with the most lively sentiments of admiration of the wisdom and goodness of God.

The preceding observations are intended to show, that the scheme of gradation, which seems to be the scheme according to which living beings have been called into existence, is that by which, in all proba-

bility, the greatest manifestations of the wisdom and goodness of God, and the greatest amount of happiness to His creatures, could be given. There are some collateral results of this scheme which, as they must have been contemplated and designed, may be adduced as further proofs of the wisdom and goodness of God.

One of the results of the scheme of gradation is, *That room is thus given for an interchange of benefits between the different orders of created beings.*

Had there been only one order of beings called into existence, all the individuals of which were equally capable of happiness, and all enjoying it in an equal degree, there would have been no room for the communication of good between the creatures. The difference between the different orders of beings makes it possible that there may be an interchange of benefit between them—the lower ministering to the comfort and happiness of those above them, and the higher protecting and providing for those below them. Our knowledge is not sufficient to warrant us in asserting, that a mutual interchange of benefit between the different orders of living beings prevails throughout the universe. But, in that part of creation which is best known to us, we see that it is so. In this world, man and the lower animals are mutually beneficial; and the condition of each would be less happy without the co-existence of the other.<sup>1</sup> It is true, that some of

<sup>1</sup> This is noticed by Cicero (*De Nat. Deorum*, Lib. ii., c. 52):  
—Accedit ad nonnullorum animantium, et earum rerum quas

the inferior animals are hostile and injurious to man. But the existence of such serves to sharpen his vigilance, to quicken his energies, and more rapidly to develop his powers, both of mind and body. On the other hand, many of them willingly submit themselves to his dominion, and contribute, in a great variety of ways, to his accommodation and comfort; insomuch that, without their co-existence and co-operation, it would be difficult to conceive how man could have made the progress and improvement which he has made. And, to see that the benefit is mutual, it is only necessary to suppose the inferior animals to be separated and set free from the fear and the service of man. The jungle, which is sometimes shaken by the thunder which man can make, and pierced by the firebolts which he scattereth in sport, would, in that case, be given up, without check, to the violence of brute force and ferocious instinct; while the fruitful field would be overrun by those noxious animals which it is the care of the husbandman to keep down. The domestic animals, too, would lose much by such an emancipation. Instead of being protected and cherished by man, almost to the prejudice of his own species, some of them would be driven out into the

terras gignit, conservationem et salutem, hominum etiam solertia et diligentia. Nam multæ et pecudes, et stirpes sunt, quæ sine procuracione hominum salvæ esse non possunt.

On the other hand, it is said (*De Nat. Deorum*, Lib. ii., c. 63): —*Ipsas bestias hominum gratia generatas esse videamus, etc.*



highways and hedges, to snatch a precarious and scanty subsistence; while others would fall a prey to the strength or to the stratagem of their more powerful or more cunning foes. The dog, instead of sharing the home and the meals of his master, and following him with fidelity and joy through all his toils and sports—instead of having his fine instinct turned to useful purposes, and his natural sagacity sharpened into something like human intelligence—would be driven to wage a hungry and desperate warfare with his congener the wolf. The feathered songster, which hopped in security and happiness round its gilded cage, and seemed to sing in unison with the joy of the family and in gratitude for their kindness, would have to pour forth its melodious notes upon the desert air, only as a signal for the devouring kite to pounce upon it. In short, separated from the society, and freed from the fear and the dominion of man, the domestic animals would be thrown helpless upon the play of their instincts, and either multiply so fast as to become the victims of famine, or fall an easy prey to the assaults of their natural enemies.

We cannot say, with certainty, because we do not see clearly, how, or how far, the condition of man, in this world, may be better, in consequence of the existence of higher orders of beings in the universe. But we know, from the best authority, that to the higher orders of beings the condition of the human race is an object of deep contemplation and interest.

We read in Scripture, that into the things which pertain to the redemption of man, ‘the angels desire to look;’ or, as it might have been rendered, ‘stooping down, they look,’ as if desirous to see more than a distant view can reveal.<sup>1</sup> And, that the scheme of human redemption may be known, not only in other worlds and to other orders of being, but may be regarded throughout the universe<sup>2</sup> as the most glorious display of the wisdom and goodness of God, has been thought to be highly probable by some distinguished theologians.—(See Dr Chalmers’ *Astronomical Discourses*.) Our theological poet has said, ‘Millions of spiritual<sup>3</sup> creatures walk the earth.’ And an opinion has long prevailed, that they walk not without an errand. Both among Jews and Gentiles, and also among the Christian fathers, we find traces of an opinion, that every man has his guardian genius or angel,<sup>4</sup> appointed to watch over him, and to save him from evils and dangers which might otherwise over-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter i. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians iii. 10. To the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known *by the Church the manifold wisdom of God*.

<sup>3</sup> Among the means by which Cicero, quoting Posidonius, says future events are made known in dreams, one is, ‘Quod plenus aër sit immortalium animorum, in quibus tanquam insignitæ notæ veritatis appareant.’—*De Divinat.*, Lib. i., c. 30.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Nothing,’ says Jerome, ‘gives us a greater idea of the dignity of our soul, than that God has given each of us, at the moment of our birth, an angel to have care of it.’

come him. It is written, that ‘God maketh his angels messengers,’ to declare or to accomplish His will. This would seem to imply, not only that there is a scheme of gradation in the universe, but also that there may be connection and intercourse between the higher and lower orders of being. These views have been touchingly expressed by the poet:—

‘ And is there care in heaven, and is there love  
In heavenly spirits to these creatures base,  
That may compassion of their evils move ?  
There is ; or else more wretched were the case  
Of man than beasts. But oh ! the exceeding grace  
Of highest God ! that loves His creatures so,  
And all His works with mercy doth embrace,  
That blessed angels He sends to and fro,  
To serve to wicked men—to serve His wicked foe.

‘ How oft do they their silver bowers leave,  
To come to succour us that succour want !  
How oft do they with golden pinions cleave  
The flitting skies, like flying pursuivant,  
Against foul fiends to aid us militant !  
They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,  
And round about us their bright squadrons plant ;  
And all for love, and nothing for reward ;  
Oh ! why should heavenly God to man have such regard !’  
*Spenser.*

In the material universe, it appears, that the different bodies which compose it are, many of them, useful to one another ; and all of them are necessary to the stability and harmony of the whole. This earth

is so placed as to derive benefit from the sun. The moon is specially ordained to minister to its service. And such is the connection between the different bodies of the solar system, that the destruction or irregularity of any one of them would affect the whole. Astronomers have concluded that it is the same with other suns and other systems. And, as Newton, when he found that the diamond had the property characteristic of all combustible bodies, though he had not been able to make it burn, still, with unfaltering confidence in the laws of Nature here below, boldly predicted that the time would come when the diamond would be shown to be combustible; so, in modern times, the existence of heavenly bodies has been confidently asserted, before they were actually discovered, on the ground that the existence of them was necessary to explain the movements of other heavenly bodies. Now, if there be such connection and interdependence between the parts of the material universe, may not the different members of the intelligent universe be linked and connected in a similar way? It is only poetically that the stars can be said 'to dwell apart.' Why should we suppose that the different orders of intelligent beings are altogether isolated, and incapable of affecting or being affected by the destiny of one another? May there not be events and occasions on which the whole universe of intelligent beings may 'feel themselves of kin,' seeing that they all derive their intelligence from Him who is the



Father of Lights? The beneficial effects which may flow from such connection and intercourse—the wisdom and goodness of such an arrangement—have, to some, seemed a sufficient proof that it really exists. And certainly there is one kind of happiness which would have no place in creation, unless there were subordination and connection between the different orders of living beings—the happiness which arises from the communication of good. It is only on the supposition that there are different orders of living beings, and intercourse between them, that one creature can communicate good to another, or receive good from another. ‘Reduce the creation to a *perfect equality*,’ says Dr Chauncey (on the *Benevolence of the Deity*, p. 201), ‘and all participation of that part of the Creator’s happiness, the *communication of good*, is at once necessarily destroyed. For, where the same perfection and happiness, both in *kind* and *degree*, is at all times equally possessed by all beings, it is evident that *good* cannot possibly be communicated from one to another. And can it be imagined that the Deity would pitch upon a plan for the communication of good, which would render it impracticable for any of his creatures, either to resemble Him in that which is His *greatest glory*, or to partake, in any measure, of that which is His *greatest pleasure*? There is no truly benevolent mind but will readily be reconciled to a *diversity* in beings, rather than the *pleasure of communicating good* should be excluded from creation.

And excluded it must be, if there is not some *diversity*. Upon any other supposition, not one being in the creation could be the object of another's beneficence; and, consequently, the noblest and most truly Divine pleasure, that which arises from *doing good*, could not have place in the whole circle of existing creatures. So that it is evident a *diversity* of beings is so far from being an *objection* against *infinite benevolence*, that it really flows from it as its proper cause. There could not have been the manifestation of so much goodness, if there had not been *some difference* between the creatures brought into existence. And the least attention will obviously lead any one to determine, that, if goodness may be the cause of any *diversity* at all, no stop can be made, without continuing it down through all variety of orders, so long as the balance shall turn in favour of happiness, or, in other words, so long as existence can be called a *good*, and pronounced *better than not to be*?

Dr Chauncey has not adduced—but he might have adduced—in corroboration of these views, what actually takes place in that part of creation to which we belong. Among men, the difference of original endowment, and the difference of outward condition and circumstances, are almost as great as the difference may be between different orders of beings. In this way, room is given for the exercise of benevolence, and for the happiness which arises from the communication of good. And that this was the de-

signed result of such differences, can scarcely be doubted. In Scripture, they who are more powerful than others are said to be as 'gods upon the earth.' They have assigned to them the godlike office of protecting the weak, and redressing the wrongs of the injured.

'In the service of mankind to be  
As guardian gods below.'—*Thomson*.

To the rich it belongs to supply the wants of the poor—to the learned, to instruct the ignorant, and to diffuse the benefits of knowledge; and men of every rank and condition have it in command to imitate the benevolence of God, and to do good to all as they have opportunity. But for the difference of rank and condition among men, so many opportunities of doing good could not arise; and it is by every man seizing and improving the opportunities afforded him, by doing good to his neighbour, that the wisdom and goodness of this arrangement are vindicated, that the design of God in making it is followed up, that the exercise of a wise benevolence is extended, happiness more widely diffused, and an illustration given of the position which, throughout this section, it has been attempted to maintain.

Another result of the scheme of gradation is, *That it allows room for progress and improvement, among the different orders of created beings.*

To assert of wisdom and goodness, which are in-

finite, that at any given time they have been manifested to the utmost, carries with it a contradiction. There can be no *utmost* to that which is infinite. But let it be supposed that God had called into existence a system of things which was always to continue the same,—that all His works had at first been cast in the very form in which they were to remain for ever—that creation had, as it were, been stereotyped,—would such a stationary universe, though free from much of what we call evil of imperfection, have given as clear proofs of wisdom and goodness, as a universe in which what might appear to be defective was gradually to be filled up, and what might seem to be inferior was in the way of being elevated, and even what was now highest was obviously destined to be still more highly exalted? The human mind naturally desires progress and improvement for itself, and delights to contemplate them going on in everything. It is true that, although only one order of beings had been created, that order might have been made capable of progress, and of rising to a higher state of being. But it is under a scheme of gradation and diversity, that improvement and advancement can take place more extensively. The inferior animals, it is true, seem here to reach all the improvement of which they are capable. They give no indication of possessing any faculties which are not here fully developed. But man does possess faculties which cannot, in this life, be fully developed. He is in a perpetual progress



towards perfection, without the possibility of here approaching it.

‘Reason progressive, Instinct is complete :  
 Swift Instinct leaps ; slow Reason feebly climbs.  
 Brutes soon their zenith reach, their little all  
 Flows in at once ; in ages they no more  
 Could know, or do, or covet, or enjoy.  
 Was man to live coeval with the sun,  
 The patriarch pupil would be learning still,  
 Yet, dying, leave his lesson half unlearn’t.’

YOUNG, *Night Thoughts*.

Hence it is argued, that man is destined for another and a higher state of being. And, if man is gradually to rise in the scale of creation, why may not the beings above him rise also? or, it may rather be asked, *must* not they also rise? According to this view, there may be progress and improvement constantly going forward, throughout the wide bounds of creation. The universe of living beings may be gradually rising towards, without ever reaching, the perfection of its Creator. And the carrying forward of this plan, prompted by infinite goodness, and devised by infinite wisdom, may constitute the happiness of Him who is God over all, blessed for ever.

This view has been incidentally touched on by an elegant writer of the last century (*Spectator*, No. cxi.): ‘It must be a prospect pleasing to God Himself, to see His creation for ever beautifying in His eyes, and drawing nearer to Him by greater degrees of resemblance.

‘Methinks this single consideration of the progress of a finite spirit to perfection, will be sufficient to extinguish all envy in inferior natures, and all contempt in superior. That cherubim, which now appears as a god to a human soul, knows very well that the period will come about in eternity, when the human soul shall be as perfect as he himself now is ; nay, when she shall look down upon that degree of perfection as much as she now falls short of it. It is true, the higher nature still advances, and by that means preserves his distance and superiority in the scale of being ; but he knows that, how high soever the station is of which he stands possessed at present, the inferior nature will at length mount up to it, and shine forth in the same degree of glory.

‘With what astonishment and veneration may we look into our souls, where there are such hidden stores of virtue and knowledge, such inexhausted sources of perfection ! We know not yet what we shall be, nor will it ever enter into the heart of man to conceive the glory that will be always in reserve for him. The soul, considered with its Creator, is like one of those mathematical lines that may draw nearer to another, for all eternity, without a possibility of touching ; and can there be a thought so transporting as to consider ourselves in these perpetual approaches to Him, who is not only the standard of perfection but of happiness !’

## CHAPTER II.

### OF PHYSICAL EVIL.

UNDER the phrase, Physical Evil, are comprehended all those sufferings, both bodily and mental, to which man, as a being of a compound nature, is here exposed. These sufferings give rise to difficulties regarding the wisdom and goodness of God ; and, with the view of obviating these difficulties, it may be convenient to consider Physical Evil under the two heads of Pain and Death.

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### SECTION I.

#### OF PAIN.

To those proofs of the Divine wisdom and goodness which can be drawn from the nature and condition of man, it is a common objection to oppose the troubles and calamities to which he is liable. ‘Every sense,’

it has been said, ‘with which he is endowed, may be the source of pain as well as of pleasure. The nerve which vibrates with delight may be racked with agony. The various organs and members of the body, which, in their normal state, minister to our accommodation and enjoyment, may, by some slight violence or derangement, become the source of insufferable torture. The affections—the kind and benevolent affections—the exercise of which makes the heart to thrill with ecstacy and delight, and which forms the grace and honour of our nature—the tender charities which spring from the various relations of private and domestic life, if violated by the return of ingratitude, or wounded by the loss of their object, pierce the soul with anguish, which no words can paint, and no imagination can conceive. Even the best and highest privileges of our existence—the powers of reason and understanding—are liable to disorder and decay. They may wander into madness, or wither into idiotism; and man, the representative of heaven, the lord of creation, may languish in hopeless imbecility, or rave a furious animal, that is only to be kept in awe by brute force. And any or all of these evils,<sup>1</sup> it is impossible for us to avert or to escape. They form part of the condition to which we are

<sup>1</sup> A minute and animated enumeration of the natural ills to which man is exposed, may be found in the ‘*Treatise on Consolation*,’ ascribed to Cicero.—See Translation of it by Dr Thomas Blacklock. 8vo, Edinburgh, 1767, pp. 6–16.



born ; and though all may not in fact be equally exercised by them, all, as men, are equally liable to them.'

Now, if pain and calamity be thus frequent and inevitable in human life, can the Author of it be a Being of infinite wisdom and goodness? If He were so, would not joy have uniformly sat on every countenance, and happiness have fixed its dwelling in every breast? But, since the sources of pleasure and of pain are so closely allied, may not the latter afford as many, and as strong, proofs of malevolence, as the former do of benevolence, in their common Author?

With the view of obviating this difficulty, it is answered,—

I. That there is more enjoyment than suffering in human life ; and that the preponderance of the one over the other entitles us to hold by the conclusion, that God is benevolent or good.

In unfolding this answer, it becomes necessary to make a comparative estimate of the sum of human happiness and of human misery. And, in order to a fair computation, there are some circumstances which call for careful consideration ; because, in consequence of their being overlooked, the evils of human life have been greatly exaggerated.

*a. Suffering is, in general, more obtrusive, and more affecting, than enjoyment.*

It has been a question among philosophers, whether we are naturally more disposed to enter into the joys,

or into the sorrows, of others. But, let this question be determined<sup>1</sup> how it may, it must be admitted, that, in general, they who weep are more desirous to attract the attention, and to excite the sympathy or fellow-feeling, of others. They who are enduring calamity need help and consolation, while they who are in prosperity are chiefly concerned how they may best enjoy it. The one class are often loud in their lamentations, and urgent in their appeals for sympathy and assistance ; while the other class, although they may look for, and be gratified by, our congratulation, are not so forward or so clamorous in soliciting it. They may be mortified, when we refuse to rejoice along with them ; but, it would add to this mortification, if they were to ask us to do so. In this way, the sufferings of human life are brought more frequently, and more prominently before us, and we are led to form an exaggerated estimate of their comparative amount. It may also be noticed, that the sufferings of others affect and impress us more than their enjoyments, for this reason, that we know that we are liable to the one, while we may have little or no chance of sharing the other. What are reckoned the advantages of the world, such as great wealth, high rank, and lofty titles, can fall to the lot of comparatively few. But pain, in any or all of its forms, is the common lot of humanity. Hence the enduring of it by others affects or impresses us

<sup>1</sup> Dr Adam Smith maintained the former, and Bishop Butler the latter, of these views.

more, in consequence of our own liability to suffer it. We hear of splendid fortunes and brilliant successes as of things at a distance, in which we have little interest or share ; but poverty and pain come home to the business and bosom of every man. And hence, they who, in their own experience, have had much suffering, or who have frequently been called on to feel and to relieve the sufferings of others, may be led, especially if they be of a melancholy temperament, to form the most dark and distressing views of human life, and to regard it as a scene in which suffering, if it does not preponderate, bears a painful proportion to enjoyment.

If, instead of forming our estimate of human life from personal experience and observation, recourse be had to the pages of history, to learn what has taken place in other ages and in other countries, there is still room for mistake and miscalculation. History delights to record, chiefly, those events which strike and startle. Famine and pestilence, earthquakes and inundations, wars and insurrections, burning cities, and routed armies, and pillaged countries, and massacred inhabitants, are described in the most graphic and glowing language which the historian can command. But the quiet transactions of ordinary life, the peaceful enjoyment of the social and domestic charities, and the pleasing progress of art and civilization, are passed over in comparative silence. So that they who form their estimate of human life from the dark and bloody

pages of history, are ready to regard it as a more turbulent and unhappy state than it really is. This mistake is also aided by the writers of tragedy and romance; who, affecting to purify the soul by means of pity and terror, select as their themes the most distressful events which have occurred, or which can be imagined. The effect of such narratives and representations is, to give to human life a darker and more melancholy hue than what really belongs to it. In the minds of many, who are familiar with such writings, the real and imaginary are sometimes blended and confounded, and the result is, an opinion that the condition of man, in this world, is full of misery and barren of happiness. (See Dr Balguy's *Divine Benevolence*, Part III. sect. 4.)

While the evils of human life are thus liable to be exaggerated, its advantages are liable to be overlooked; and it should be considered,

*b. That enjoyments which are common are often but little thought of.*

This position has been so well illustrated by Paley (*Nat. Theology*, chap. xxvi.), that, although the illustration might be varied, it would not easily be made better or more striking. 'One great cause of our insensibility to the goodness of the Creator is the very extensiveness of His bounty. We prize but little what we share only in common with the rest, or with the generality of our species. When we hear of blessings, we think forthwith of successes, of prosperous



fortunes, of honours, riches, preferments,—that is, of those advantages and superiorities over others which we happen either to possess, or to be in pursuit of, or to covet. The common benefits of our nature entirely escape us. Yet these are the great things. These constitute what most properly ought to be accounted blessings of Providence ; what alone, if we might so speak, are worthy of its care. Nightly rest and daily bread, the ordinary use of our limbs, and senses, and understandings, are gifts which admit of no comparison with any other. Yet, because almost every man we meet with possesses these, we leave them out of our enumeration. They raise no sentiment, they move no gratitude. Now, herein is our judgment perverted by our selfishness. A blessing ought in truth to be *more* satisfactory ; the bounty of the donor is rendered more conspicuous by its very diffusion, its commonness, its cheapness, by its falling to the lot, and forming the happiness of the great bulk and body of our species, as well as of ourselves. . . . It is in those things which are so common as to be no distinction, that the amplitude of the Divine benignity is perceived.’

These considerations may serve to show how, on the one hand, the evil of human life comes to be exaggerated, while, on the other hand, the good is liable to be overlooked or undervalued.

It is not denied, however, that, for man, pain and suffering exist, and in a degree which bears a consi-

derable proportion to pleasure and enjoyment. It is admitted, that the web of human life is of mingled texture—warp of joy and woof of woe. It is admitted that, here, good is generally alloyed with evil,—that pleasure is frequently impaired or endangered by the feeling or the fear of pain. But, that the pains and evils of the human condition are equal or superior, in weight or duration, to its advantages and enjoyments, may be safely denied.

‘The weather is sometimes foul,’ says an eloquent author,<sup>1</sup> ‘but it is oftener fair. Storms and hurricanes are frequent; but calms are more common. There is some sickness; but there is more health. There is some pain; but there is more ease. There is some mourning; but there is more joy. There is complexional depression, that asks, “Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery?” but it bears no proportion to the native cheerfulness which is open to the agreeable impressions of surrounding nature. Multitudes have been crushed under the foot of cruelty; but greater multitudes have remained unmolested by the oppressor. Many have perished with hunger and nakedness; but more have been supplied with food and raiment. Some have counted days of captivity; but the majority have never been in prison. Numbers have lost their reason; but larger numbers have retained it. The list is long of the forsaken and

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Fawcett, *Sermons*, Vol. i., p. 74.

the forlorn ; but still longer is the catalogue of those who have never failed, in some one or other, to find a friend. . . .

‘If we thus survey the chequered face of human life at large, we shall find its bright spaces more numerous than its shadows. Congratulation is more exercised than pity. The countenances that have sorrow upon them, are fewer than the faces which do not want to be wiped. And if the *whole* histories of *individuals*, whom we see in circumstances of distress, were to be laid before us, perhaps we should find few of them in which there was not a greater number of pleasant than of painful passages ; in which there was not, upon the whole, more cheerfulness than depression, more tranquillity than trouble, more corporal ease than sufferance.’

What proves that human life is, to most men, a scene of greater enjoyment than suffering, is, that none, in the right use of their faculties, are willing to retire from it ; but all are anxious rather, by every means in their power, to prolong the continuance of it, to themselves, and to their friends. They who have been bowed down, by years of pain and sickness, have also had years of health and enjoyment, and hope for more. They who have been wounded by ingratitude, or deceived by treachery, have also experienced the benefits of friendship, and the advantages of integrity and trust-worthiness. The parent who has been grieved by the waywardness and profligacy

of some members of the family, has been comforted by the virtuous conduct and dutiful affection of the rest. And he who has been disappointed in the pursuit of some favourite object, has had reason to congratulate himself on the easy attainment of others not less truly valuable. So that human life, when fairly contemplated, and rightly estimated, presents, on the whole, a scene of mixed and moderate enjoyment.

‘Pain and distress,’ says Dr Price (*On Providence*), ‘are out of the common course of nature; and this causes them to be over-rated and magnified whenever they happen. One bad fit of illness is remembered and talked of during life, though compensated so far as to be almost annihilated by many years of health and ease and comfort.’ To the same purpose, Dr Barrow has remarked (*Dissertations*, p. 266), ‘The surprise, the lamentation, the compassion, which sickness and accident and calamity excite, prove them to be comparatively rare and unexpected. Were suffering and misery the usual condition of life, they would attract little attention; they would find little sympathy and less assistance. . . . *Enjoyment and comfort are the general rule, misfortune and misery the exception.*’—See also Dr Price’s *Sermons*, p. 277.

Now, it is contended, that this excess of enjoyment above suffering—this preponderance of happiness over misery, of good over evil, in human life, proves the benevolence of the Creator. Had He designed the unhappiness of His creatures, every object which we



see or know, everything within us and without us, may serve to show how easily such an end might have been accomplished. 'If God had wished our misery,' says Paley (*Nat. Theology*, chap. xxvi.), 'He might have made sure of His purpose by forming our senses to be so many sores and pains to us, as they are now instruments of gratification and enjoyment; or by placing us amidst objects, so ill suited to our perceptions, as to have continually offended us, instead of ministering to our refreshment and delight. He might have made, for example, everything we tasted, bitter; everything we saw, loathsome; everything we touched, a sting; every smell, a stench; and every sound, a discord.'

The same reasoning, with the same style of illustration, had previously been employed by Dr Price (*Sermons*, p. 284). Making the supposition, that God did not design the happiness, but that He did design the unhappiness, of His creatures, then, 'The bee would have been without her honey' (but with her sting); 'the rose without its fragrance' (but with its prickles). 'The fire would have scorched, without warming us. The light of day would have dazzled, without cheering us. The appetites and senses would have been the instruments of torture, and never of pleasure to us, except when turned out of their common course by incidental causes. Every touch would have felt like the rubbing of a wound. Every taste would have been a bitter, and every sound a scream.'

Far different is the condition in which we are placed. How rare are the instances in which our senses are offended, compared with those in which they are gratified! How many sources of pleasure, animal and intellectual, are presented for our enjoyment! And how wise and how wonderful is the suitableness or adaptation of our constitution, both bodily and mental, to the condition and circumstances in which we have been placed! Now, when we see the good and the agreeable thus prevailing over the evil and the painful, can we doubt the benevolence of Him by whom the system was established? ‘In *human* works, it is true,’ says Dr Thomas Balguy (*Divine Benevolence Asserted*, Part III.), ‘the *design* cannot always be inferred from the *effect*. For *men* may be deceived and disappointed; but in *Divine* works, such mistakes are impossible.’ ‘Deus falli quî potuit,’ says Cotta (Cicero, *De Nat. Deorum*, Lib. III. c. 31). ‘What the Deity has performed,’ says Dr Barrow (*Dissertations*, p. 264), ‘He must have intended. When we reason upon the acts of Omnipotence, the inference from the general effect to the original design is legitimate and conclusive. The good which His dependents receive at His hands and enjoy under His protection, was undoubtedly the object of His counsel, the donation of His benevolence.’

But, if the good which is enjoyed in human life be accepted as proof of a benevolent character and of a benevolent design in the Creator, why should not the

evil that is endured be admitted as evidence of an opposite design and of an opposite character?

To this difficulty, when urged in this form, it is replied,—

II. That the good was intended, but the evil is incidental; that is, that the evil to be found in the present state of things, was not the direct object of the Divine contemplation, and is not the ultimate end of the Divine arrangements, but is a consequence, arising from the working out of a scheme, which was framed with the design to produce good, and to diffuse happiness.

Metaphysical arguments have been adduced to show, that as all malevolence implies defect, it is utterly inconsistent with the idea of necessary existence, and incompatible with the idea of a perfect being. The supposition of two contrary and contending principles of action in the Divine Mind, is a supposition not only at variance with the perfection and happiness of the Supreme Being, but irreconcilable to our views of the unity and simplicity of the Divine Nature. It is absolutely inconceivable, that there should be in the character of God an admixture of benevolence and malignity, corresponding to the proportions in which good and evil are found in the world. Such a contrariety of disposition or of design cannot be supposed to exist, any more than we can suppose the same fountain to send forth sweet water and bitter. He who has sent forth from Him the means of happiness,

which are evidently prepollent in the present system of things, and which can be ascribed to no other source than the purest and most unprompted benevolence, cannot be capable of malignantly grieving or afflicting the children of men. If there be evil or unhappiness under His administration, it can only spring from arrangements, of which the design was to produce good, and of which the result is to diffuse happiness.

In accordance with these views, it has been remarked, that throughout the works of creation, no object has yet been found which is essentially and universally injurious and evil. ‘All the new discoveries that are made in the material world,’ says Professor Arthur (*Discourses*, p. 70), ‘furnish us with new instances of good intention, and present to us no instances of bad intention. They show us, that many objects in nature, which were formerly thought useless, have a most beneficial tendency; and they even show us, that many of those things which the ignorance of former times represented as noxious, tend to promote the benefit and welfare of sentient beings. The appearances of evil in the material world are gradually decreasing, while the appearances of kind and benevolent intention are every day multiplying.<sup>1</sup> The

1 ‘O! mickle is the powerful grace that lies  
In herbs, plants, stones, and their true qualities;  
For nought so vile, that on the earth doth live,  
But to the earth some special good doth give.’

—Shakespeare.



complaints of men have been discovered, in many instances, to be founded in ignorance ; and the proficiency of knowledge will probably more and more prove this to have been the case.' At least, every step that has hitherto been taken in science—every improvement that has yet been made in art—every new discovery in the objects and operations of nature,—has only afforded new illustrations of the benevolence of the Creator. It is not meant that successive advances in knowledge may come at last to let us see that there is no such thing as evil in nature. It is not meant to urge the argument<sup>1</sup> so far as to say, that evil may come ultimately to be obliterated from our conceptions of the present state ; and that, while every thing in nature may be made to minister to enjoyment, nothing may remain to be the occasion or instrument of suffering. What is meant is, that as our knowledge of nature increases, our knowledge of the benevolent designs of its Author increases also ; and, as has been observed, that it increases without

<sup>1</sup> It was maintained by Sallustius (*Opuscula Mythol.*, Thom. Gale, p. 266), that evil is a nonentity, or the mere absence of good, as darkness is nothing in itself, but only the absence of light. In like manner, Leibnitz said, 'Evil does not proceed from a *principle of evil*. Cold does not proceed from a *principle of coldness*, nor darkness from a *principle of darkness*. Evil is mere *privation*.' Similar views were held by Thomas Aquinas and Augustine ; and Plato maintained that *Privation*, in the sense of imperfection, is the inherent condition of all finite existence, and the necessary cause of evil.

any drawback. That is, while, on the one hand, the proofs of the Divine benevolence are multiplying, and consequently the difficulties regarding it diminishing, so, on the other hand, the supposition, that there is in the Divine Mind a feeling of malevolence, or in the Divine plan a purpose of malignity, is a supposition which is never gathering the least shadow of support. No one has ever stumbled upon any substance which can be pronounced purely and absolutely injurious, nor hit upon any arrangement, the sole and the direct object of which is to produce pain and misery. Benefit and pleasure are the aim and end of the Divine arrangements; inconvenience and suffering are only incidental.

‘ Evil,’ says Paley (*Nat. Theology*, chap. xxvi.), ‘ no doubt exists, but is never, that we can perceive, the *object* of contrivance. Teeth are contrived to eat, not to ache; their aching now<sup>1</sup> and then is incidental to the contrivance, perhaps inseparable from it—or even, if you will, let it be called a defect in the con-

<sup>1</sup> Dr Thos. Balguy, *Divine Benevolence Asserted*, Part I., first published in 1781, had said, ‘ Every part of the body, and every faculty of the mind, was evidently *designed* for the good it produces; but there is no appearance that any of them was designed to produce evil. Thus, for instance, the *stomach* was designed for digestion, not indigestion; the *eyes* for seeing, not for smarting; the *feet* for walking, not for the pains of the gout. So, again, the passion of *shame* was designed to prevent disgraceful actions, not surely to influence an unhappy mother to the murder of her own child.’

trivance ; but it is not the object of it. This is a distinction which well deserves to be attended to. In describing implements of husbandry, you would hardly say of the sickle, that it was made to cut the reaper's hand ; though, from the construction of the instrument, and the manner of using, this mischief often follows. But, if you had occasion to describe instruments of torture or execution, this engine, you would say, is to extend the sinews ; this, to dislocate the joints ; this, to break the bones ; this, to scorch the soles of the feet. Here pain and misery are the very objects of the contrivance. Now, nothing of this sort is to be found in the works of nature. We never discover a train of contrivance to bring about an evil purpose. No anatomist ever discovered a system of organization calculated to produce pain and disease ; or, in explaining the parts of the human body, ever said, this is to irritate ; this, to inflame ; this duct is to convey the gravel to the kidneys ; this gland, to secrete the humour which forms the gout. If, by chance, he comes to a part of which he knows not the use, the most he can say is, that it is useless ; no one ever suspects that it is put there to incommode, to annoy, or to torment.' Strictly and philosophically speaking, he is not entitled to say that it is useless ; the most he can say is, that he knows not its use.

Similar remarks have been made by Dr Southwood Smith (*Philosophy of Health*, vol. i. p. 100). And

he has taken up another position in proof of the Divine benevolence. ‘Moreover,’ he adds, ‘all such action of the organs as is productive of pleasure, is conducive to their complete development, and consequently to the increase of their capacity for producing pleasure; while all such action of the organs as is productive of pain, is preventive of their complete development, and consequently diminishes their capacity for producing pain. The natural tendency of pleasure is to its own augmentation and perpetuity. Pain, on the contrary, is self-destructive. . . . Enjoyment is not only the end of life, but it is the only condition of life which is compatible with a protracted term of existence. The happier a human being is, the longer he lives; the more he suffers, the sooner he dies; to add to enjoyment, is to lengthen life; to inflict pain, is to shorten the duration of existence.’

These remarks may serve to show, that the guiding and governing design of the Creator, in the arrangements of nature, was to produce good or diffuse happiness; and that the evil or misery which may result from the working of them, is to be regarded as *incidental*, rather than directly *intended*.

In further vindication of the wisdom and goodness of God, it may be remarked,—

III. That He hath made provisions, by which the evil of human life, even while it lasts, is alleviated.



The three great sources of relief to man under evil, are—*Habit, Hope, and Sympathy.*

### HABIT.

At first it may look like a solecism, both in argument and illustration, to bring forward the power which Habit has in reconciling us to things painful, as an instance of benevolent arrangement ; because it may be said, that any effect which Habit may have, in diminishing the sense or feeling of what is evil, can only result from long-continued experience of that evil ; so that to come to its benevolent and healing tendency, we must, in the first place, go through the endurance of pain and suffering : and therefore it may be said, that in proportion as we extol the composing or reconciling tendency of habit, in the same proportion we must suppose that evil has been experienced ; as it is only by evil being experienced that Habit comes to have any power in mitigating the pressure of it. All this is admitted ; but while it is admitted, we are entitled to advance farther, and to ask, Why is it, that long-continued experience of evil is followed by a diminished sense or feeling of that evil ? Why is it, that a stroke of the same severity does not fall with the same weight the second time that it did the first ? Why is it, that pain, continued for two days, is not felt so acutely the second day as the first ? We

say the body gets accustomed, and the mind gets reconciled, to any situation in which they may be placed. But that constitution of body and of mind by which the accommodation takes place, was arranged by God ; and as it is an arrangement by which the pain and evil which are in the world come to be less felt, it is an arrangement which should be regarded as a proof of benevolence. It is plain, that things might have been otherwise arranged. Indeed, looking at the case beforehand, we should be ready to conclude, that the same cause, in continued operation, would continue to produce the same effect—that the same infliction of pain would be followed by the same amount of suffering. But there is a disturbing or resisting force in the human constitution. There is a check or drag put upon the wheels of evil. The power of Habit grows up in opposition to it. Evil may continue, but the sense or feeling of it is diminished : and this amounts to a diminution of the evil itself ; for physical evil or pain exists, only in so far as it is felt.

From not attending to this alleviating influence of Habit, or to that pliability which the human constitution, both of body and mind, has, of accommodating itself to situations and circumstances which are naturally and at first painful, there can be no doubt, that many have been led to form the most erroneous and exaggerated views as to the amount of evil and suffering in human life. This mistake was noticed by

Seneca. In his Treatise, *De Providentia*, c. 4, there is a passage to the following effect:—‘Consider all these nations with whom the tranquillity of our empire terminates;—I speak of the Germans, and other wandering hordes in the neighbourhood of the Danube, oppressed with a perpetual winter, and with a lowering sky. Their scanty subsistence depends on a barren soil; their shelter from rain is furnished by thatch and leaves; they pass over the fens on ice, which gives them solidity; they employ as articles of food the wild beasts which they have seized in the chase. Do these men appear to you to be unhappy? No. *Habit becomes to them a second nature*; and what was at first imposed by necessity, is now converted into a source of pleasure. The truth is, that the same external circumstances which you picture to yourself as the extreme of wretchedness, constitute, to numerous tribes of your fellow-creatures, the whole circle of enjoyment which human life affords them. *Hoc, quod tibi calamitas videtur, tot gentium vita est.*’—See an eloquent passage to the same purport in Professor Arthur’s *Discourses*, p. 61. 8vo, Glasgow, 1803.

The words of the poet, too, may here be applied:—

‘The shuddering tenant of the frigid zone  
 Boldly proclaims the happiest spot his own;  
 Extols the treasures of his stormy seas,  
 And his long nights of revelry and ease.  
 The naked negro, panting at the line,  
 Boasts of his golden sands and palmy wine;

Basks in the glare, or stems the tepid wave,  
And thanks his gods for all the good they gave.'

From the same want of attending to the power of Habit in reconciling to things painful, and also from transferring our own feelings into the bosoms of others, who are strangers to them, many persons, and many situations in civilized life, have been thought to be miserable, and suffering, in a degree far beyond the reality.

'He whose life is made up of recumbence and repose, and who, in consequence of the excessive delicacy he has derived from the perfect softness of a situation that is all over velvet, looks out from his seat of ease with an eye of compassion upon those who have been condemned from their birth to laborious employment, confined to the rough accommodations of life, and exposed to the keen severities of nature.' Yet this man of silk and perfume may be bestowing his pity upon happiness superior to his own,—'upon those who, while they are free from the languor and listlessness by which he is consumed, yet find no weight in their burden, perceive no coarseness in their food, complain of no hardness in their couch, and feel no bleakness in the blast.'—Joseph Fawcett, *Sermons*, vol. i., *Sermon* 3.

There is, then, in the human constitution a power or pliability by which it adapts itself to situations, and accommodates itself to circumstances, which at first are disagreeable or painful. And as, in consequence



of this power, much of the evil that is in the world comes to be less felt, it is contended, that the insertion of such a power in the human constitution is a proof of the goodness of God. It may be said, perhaps, that, in virtue of the same power in our constitution, by which our sense of pain abates, by being long-continued, our sense of pleasure is also diminished; and that, by the same process, which reconciles us to situations which are disagreeable, we become less sensible of those which are delightful; and the argument attempted to be derived from this part of our constitution may be very much weakened or altogether nullified. It is to be observed, however, that that law of our nature, in accordance with which we become less sensible of sensations which are pleasant, when they are long continued, and in consequence of which we are led to seek for new sensations, is a wise arrangement for stimulating the activity of our minds, and increasing more rapidly our stock of knowledge; and the additional charm which novelty gives to our enjoyments, is a sufficient balance for any diminution of them by their being long continued. Besides, it is not in every case that our enjoyments are diminished by their being long continued. On the contrary, many of them are increased by this circumstance. We get attached to things to which we have been long accustomed. We come, for example, to have our favourite walk, our favourite flower, and our favourite landscape, to which we return with in-

creasing satisfaction and complacency ; so that, while use or custom, on the one hand, enhances to us the value of those things and of those situations which are reckoned pleasant, it reconciles us, on the other hand, to those which are painful. It is impossible to conclude that we would have been so constituted by a Being who sought to make us miserable. In short, the reconciling and enhancing influence which Habit has, could only have been given by a Being who designed to make us happy, by alleviating the evils to which, by our nature and condition, we are liable.

It may further be remarked, that the evils of human life are very much alleviated, and it was obviously intended that they should be alleviated, by the influence of

#### HOPE.

We might have been so constituted, that, when evil came upon us, we should have brooded over it incessantly, and never have contemplated the possibility of its being alleviated or removed. But such is not the constitution of the human mind—such is not its tendency when in a normal and healthy state. On the contrary, the natural tendency of the human mind is to look forward, and to lessen the pressure of present

evil by the anticipation of future good. This tendency may originally belong to different individuals in different degrees. But it is the duty of all moderately to indulge and cherish it, as it was obviously given with the design of alleviating the evils of human life. Let the same amount of adversity fall upon two individuals, of whom the one is of a sanguine and hopeful temperament, which he has cultivated till he has attained to a habitual cheerfulness, and the other is of a phlegmatic and melancholy disposition, which he has taken no pains to check or correct; there will be all the difference in the world in the way in which this adversity will be borne by them. By the one, it will be comparatively little felt; and any feeling of it will be lightened by the hopeful anticipation of its removal. By the other, it will be reckoned a burden almost too grievous to be borne; and its grievousness will be aggravated by the fear, that it cannot, or will not, be speedily removed. But the aggravation which is thus given to the evils of human life should not be charged against the goodness of God; seeing that, by endowing the human mind with the capacity of cherishing Hope, He hath made a provision for the alleviation of these evils. Men deprive themselves of this alleviation by refusing to cherish Hope, and giving way to melancholy or despair. Hope, when it is well founded, is just the lively expression of a latent trust in God. That eager stretching towards a time when evil shall be removed,

is a significant confession of faith in His goodness—of a belief that He, in whose hands our lot is, will do all things wisely and well; and that, though it may be ill with us now, it shall not always continue to be so. Even the severest pressure of adversity cannot altogether extinguish Hope, when it is well founded. He who does not believe in God, or in the goodness of God, may sink under the pressure of evil. ‘I had fainted,’ said one whose faith in the goodness of God had been severely tried, ‘unless I had believed to see the goodness of God in the land of the living.’—Ps. xxvii. 13. He who has this faith is seldom altogether deprived of the cheering influence of Hope. ‘Whatever possessions fly from his hand, whatever friends desert his side, Hope still stays behind,—the brother of all his adversity, the star of all his nights, the cordial of all his sickness, the casket of all his poverty, the angel of his prison, before whose luminous form he feels in fancy his fetters falling off. In spite of protracted delay, in spite of repeated disappointment, it continues to smile—promises on—and persists in painting futurity fair. He whose days have long been dark, looks forward still to brighter. The prisoner who has numbered many days and many nights of captivity, sometimes suspends his sighing, and says to himself, “I may one day be free.” The sick man who, for many a year, has sought for health in vain, sets out for some new spring at which he has not yet drunk, or some new



air, the healing breath of which he has not yet inhaled, in the fond hope that there the fugitive may at length be found.'

Well has the poet said—

'With thee, sweet Hope, resides the heavenly light,  
That pours remotest rapture on the sight ;  
Thine is the charm of life's bewildered way,  
That calls each slumbering passion into play.  
Waked by thy torch, I see the sister band,  
On tiptoe watching, start at thy command,  
And fly where'er thy mandate bids them steer,  
To pleasure's path, or glory's bright career.'

Now, it was God who gave to Hope its influence in lessening the pressure of evil; and it must surely be admitted, that to have endowed man with this powerful propensity to call up bright prospects of enjoyment, and thus to illuminate and cheer the cold and dark shadows of suffering, was an act and a proof of benevolence in Him by whom the human mind was constituted, and the human condition arranged.

In enumerating the provisions which have been made for the alleviation of evil, it would be wrong to omit the influence of

#### SYMPATHY.

It is true that this alleviating influence is not situ-

ated within the bosom of the sufferer himself. The help is held out to him from another. But this does not affect nor alter the argument. The insertion, on the one hand, of a feeling of Sympathy, has reference, on the other, to a state of suffering. And the design and the adaptation are only the stronger and more apparent, that the evil is in one place, and the remedy or alleviation in another. The suitableness of the one to the other is what the argument is founded on. And seeing that there is suffering in the world, the power of Sympathy to mitigate it; should be regarded as a countervailing and benevolent provision. It is a provision, the power and the value of which we are very apt to underrate, because we do not always perceive them. The consolations of Sympathy are secret and silent. They make no noise, like the sufferings which they mitigate, and sometimes more than mitigate. It is not uncommon to hear those who have recovered from sickness, acknowledging the kind attentions of their friends, by saying, 'That it was almost worth while to be ill, in order to be so well taken care of;' thus admitting that the pain which is in the world is sometimes so soothed and borne down by the Sympathy which it excites, as to be almost, if not altogether forgotten. And not only is the pain soothed and borne down by the Sympathy which it excites, but the Sympathy which has thus been excited, often gives birth to feelings of affection and friendship which last through life. As the rush-

ing of the torrent down the mountain's side lays open the gold and precious stones which are concealed in it, so, the day of adversity discovers those rich veins of affection and friendship which lie hid in the bosoms of those around, and leads us to love and value them more than before. In losing our worldly advantages, we may gain a friend more valuable than them all. Now, the pain and adversity are much more obtrusive, and are much more observed, than the Sympathy which soothes them, or the lasting friendship which that Sympathy may beget. We hear of sickness ; but we are not permitted to look into the room where it lies and is comforted—where affection waits on it, to smooth its uneasy couch, and enliven its languid eye. 'We hear of ruined fortunes—the crash resounds and reaches every ear ; but we follow not the ruined man in his retirement from the world—we trace not his silent retreat into the hearts that stand open to receive him ; our eyes go not after him in his secret entrance into that temple of Friendship which is his sanctuary from the pursuit of sorrow.' Now, let it be asked, Why was Sympathy implanted in the human breast ? or, Why was such a powerful influence, in alleviating suffering, imparted to it ? Such a provision could only proceed from the benevolence of our Creator. A being who was malevolent, or who designed our misery, would not have so constituted us ; but would have left us, unsoothed and unsupported, to encounter the evils of our nature and

our condition. But when provision is made for alleviating those evils that are in human life, a distinct proof is given of the goodness of God; while, at the same time, His wisdom is manifested by thus affording scope for the progress and improvement of the human character. ‘Men are not left,’ says Dr Price (*On Providence*, p. 73), ‘as they might have been, to perish irretrievably by the calamities that happen to them; but it is put into their power, in numberless cases, to help one another, and to prevent the fatal effects that would follow particular calamities. A provision is made, in the spontaneous agency and benevolence of our fellow-creatures, for a great addition to the happiness of life, and diminution of its sufferings. And this itself becomes a still higher display of goodness, beyond which we cannot easily enlarge our ideas. For, by establishing a plan wherein beings are thus left to be the voluntary causes of another’s happiness, room is given for the exercise of beneficence—for gratifying the noblest affection in their natures, and enjoying the most godlike bliss of which they are capable.’

In the preceding part of this section, it has been attempted to show that there is more good than evil, more enjoyment than suffering, in human life; and from this preponderance, it has been argued that He who made us and marked out our lot, contemplated and designed our happiness. In corroboration of this argument, it has been shown that the evils to which



we are liable, do not appear to have been the aim or end of any contrivance or arrangement, but arise incidentally from contrivances and arrangements, the design and the result of which are obviously beneficial. It has further been shown, that there are various provisions by which the pain and evil which are incident to our nature and condition may be alleviated or removed. There is thus evidence that God designed the happiness of His creatures ; there is no evidence of any arrangement expressly and solely to produce suffering ; and there is evidence of a desire to alleviate it. Now, the guiding and governing principle in the Divine mind being thus shown to be benevolence, or a design to produce good and diffuse happiness, the existence of evil or pain should be presumed to be in some way necessary or useful towards the attainment of this end, rather than be brought forward as an evidence of malignity or defect. How do we judge in other cases ? When a friend, who has given us many and substantial proofs of his desire to promote our welfare, treats us in a way which appears to be inconsistent with his former kindness, we do not immediately reject all the evidence which he had formerly given us of the benevolence of his character, and come to the painful conclusion that he is a capricious and malignant being, and that he is now seeking our misery and ruin. The long-sustained friendship which we have experienced from him prevents us from giving way to such a suspicion ; and, holding

fast by the proofs of his former kindness, we change not our opinion of his character, but conclude that those parts of his conduct which appear to us to be unkind, may yet be consistent with the benevolence of his character, and may even (although we cannot see or say how) conduce to our own good and happiness.<sup>1</sup> Now, why should we refuse to the character of the Supreme Being that justice which we so readily accord to the character of an earthly benefactor? Surrounded as we are with proofs of the Divine benevolence, and soothed and cheered under the pains and evils to which we are liable, why should these pains and evils drive us into any dark or injurious views of the Divine character? Why should we not rather hold by the clear and preponderating evidence in favour of the Divine benevolence, and conclude that those things which we reckon evil and painful may yet be necessary or useful, towards the promotion of individual or general good, and not inconsistent with the character of a wise and gracious Being? This conclusion would be reasonable, even although we were incapable of discovering any advantages flowing from those circumstances in our lot which we call evil or painful. But, if it could be shown that those things which we call evil are often instrumental in the production of good, and that pain and pleasure

<sup>1</sup> See a similar train of reasoning and illustration in *Sermons* by Joseph Fawcett, vol. i. p. 79, and also in Lord Brougham's *Essay on the Origin of Evil*, p. 60.

are inseparably connected in the lot of a being like man, the difficulties regarding the wisdom and goodness of God would be still further lessened. Let it be observed, then,

IV. That, in human life, pain often tends to the heightening and more full enjoyment of pleasure.

If it be asked, whether God might not have so made us, as that we should have been sensible to pleasure, while yet we were not liable to feel pain, it would be rash to deny that He could have so made us. But we must have been differently constituted from what we now are, as human beings; and it is by no means plain that we would have been more happy. If we were altogether incapable of feeling pain, we would be much less sensible of pleasure than we are at present. 'He never knew pleasure who never felt pain.' We know physical pain and pleasure only through the instrumentality of our bodily frame. And it is a law of our compound nature, that a sensation, when long continued, gradually becomes weaker, till at length it may cease to be felt. If the eye continue to look steadfastly upon any one object, the image gradually fades, till at length it disappears; and it is as if the eye were fixed on vacancy. If a sapid body be kept long in the mouth, we become gradually insensible to the taste of it. If we grasp a hard body firmly in the hand, we soon become unconscious of its presence. So that variety and contrast seem to be necessary to our hav-

ing clear and definite sensations. Every exercise of the senses may be said to imply its contrary; because every exercise of the senses, when long continued, becomes less and less felt, till what began in giving pleasure leaves us in indifference or unconsciousness. Thus it would appear that a succession of sensations from which pain was excluded, could only be given to a being constituted like man, by his being allowed to be conscious of the sensation so long as it was felt to be agreeable, and then sinking into indifference or unconsciousness—that is, that his life should be an alternation of pleasure and insensibility. How much more wise and benevolent is the existing arrangement, by which pleasure is heightened by the intermixture of pain, and by which, instead of sinking into unconsciousness, we are kept continually active and alert, in the pursuit of new gratifications; or in guarding against the evils and dangers to which we are here exposed. Pain seems to be employed in this life as the contrast and heightener of our pleasure, and as the stimulus to our activity, and the guardian of our life and health. The pain of burning puts us on our guard against the element of fire, which may prove destructive of life and organization. The pain of hunger warns us to take, in due season, the food which is necessary to sustain and invigorate our bodily frame. We may not always see the end answered by the feeling of pain so plainly and directly as in the instances specified; but the seeing it in one instance should lead



us to infer it in more. And it is highly probable that many of those actions which are necessary and useful to us as living beings, and which are now so familiar to us that we do them almost unconsciously, were originally done at the prompting of some disagreeable sensation. So that pain serves as a monitor, warning us to do those things which are necessary to the preservation of our health and life, and to flee from those things which may prove injurious or destructive to them. It also appears that, to beings with a bodily frame, the feeling is necessary or useful to keep alive the sensibility to pleasure, and to give a higher zest to the enjoyment of it. Indeed, the mere cessation of pain sometimes gives rise to a state of satisfaction scarcely less pleasurable than a state of positive enjoyment. ‘A man resting from a fit of the gout,’ says Paley (*Nat. Theology*, chap. xxvi.), ‘is, for the time, in possession of feelings which undisturbed health cannot impart. They may be dearly bought, but still they are to be set against the price. And, indeed, it depends upon the duration or urgency of the pain, whether they be dearly bought or not. I am far from being sure that a man is not a gainer by suffering a moderate interruption of bodily ease, for a couple of hours out of the four and twenty.’ Paley has noticed two very common observations, as favouring this apparent paradox. One of these is, that remissions of pain call forth, from those who experience them, stronger expressions of satisfaction and gratitude to-

wards both the author and the instrument of their relief, than are excited by advantages of any other kind. ‘A rescue from some imminent danger,’ says an author with whose writings Paley was familiar (*Light of Nature Pursued*, first edit., vol. iii., p. 253), ‘gives a stronger apprehension of kindness than a thousand good offices, and pleasure never comes so welcome as when preceded by pain ; nay, ease alone, after being delivered from trouble, affords a joy that satisfies the mind, without any of those amusements necessary to interest us at another time : most of our vexations make us some returns of this kind, and many of them, perhaps, greater than the uneasiness they gave us while present.

The other common observation which Paley has noticed, as confirming the opinion, that a moderate interruption of pleasure, by means of pain, contributes upon the whole to the general amount of happiness, is, ‘that the spirits of sick men do not sink in proportion to the acuteness of their sufferings ; but rather appear to be roused and supported, not by pain, but by the high degree of comfort which they derive from its cessation, or even its subsidency, whenever that occurs ; and which they taste with a relish that diffuses some portion of mental complacency over the whole of that mixed state of sensations in which disease had placed them.’ There is certainly a good deal of force in this observation ; for men’s spirits would sink, exactly in proportion as their sufferings increased, if it were not

that the relaxation of suffering is accompanied with such an increase of satisfaction, as to make them patiently submit to the one in the prospect of attaining the other, or in the hope of being altogether freed from the cause of suffering. In short, it would appear that a greater amount of enjoyment arises from the admixture of pain with pleasure than would result from a different constitution of things—at least, than would result from a constitution of things where, with our present capacities for pleasure, we were altogether insensible to pain. If there were such an instrument as a Hedonometer<sup>1</sup>—that is, a scale of degrees by which we could estimate and sum up the amount of human enjoyment, we should find that, after deducting the pain to which we are exposed, the height to which our enjoyment has been urged by the experience of pain, is higher than it would have risen without that experience. The stream of human happiness, checked and broken as it is by rocks and obstacles, is a much livelier stream, in its sparkling and leaping and winding course, than if it had flowed on with the dull and direct tendency of a canal. In a word, the pains and inconveniences to which we are here exposed, have not been introduced into the lot of man, unnecessarily to afflict him; but, in order to make him value more highly, and enjoy more fully, the good and happiness which have been designed and provided for him. ‘Our

<sup>1</sup> ἡδονή, pleasure—μέτρον, a measure.

sorrow is the measure of our joy. To know little of grief, is to know little of gladness. There must be light and shadow, or there will be no sublimity.'

All that remains to be added in this place is, to remark,

V. That a mixed state, in which there is an excess of happiness over misery, proves goodness, as well as a state in which there was the same amount of happiness, without misery, could do; and it proves wisdom more clearly.

'The value of existence,' says the author of the *Light of Nature Pursued* (first edit., vol. iii., p. 251), 'depends upon the quantity of happiness received therein; and every evil is the same as a subtraction from that quantity. If, then, the good and evil, compared together, leave a balance of the former, which, if given alone, would be sufficient to denominate the creature happy, and be thought a gift becoming Infinite Goodness to bestow, why should not both together be thought so too, since they are of equal value?' He illustrates this point in the following way, which, though rather familiar for so solemn a topic, makes his meaning abundantly plain:—'A salary of five hundred pounds a year, chargeable with a constant land-tax of four shillings in the pound, is equal to four hundred without that deduction. And, if a friend put you in a way of making a thousand pounds, by laying out four hundred, you would think yourself



as much obliged to him as if he had helped you to a clear six hundred. So, if there be a profuse abundance of happiness, together with a small mixture of suffering, distributed throughout the universe, the condition of the creatures is as valuable, as if the net balance of the former had been given alone. But this would have been thought to denominate the Giver infinitely good ; why, then, should the state of the world, as it is, occasion any doubts to the contrary ?’

The same sentiments have been expressed in substance by Bishop Butler. And Dr Price has said (*Sermons*, p. 278), ‘ What goodness requires, is the production of happiness ; and this is *equally* produced, whether the happiness of a being is so much enjoyment, unmixed with pain, or the same degree of enjoyment, consisting of a clear excess of pleasure above pain.’ And in his *Essay on Providence*, p. 111, he has said, ‘ As long as the sum of the happiness of any being exceeds that of his miseries, God is kind to him ; nor does it make the least difference to a being, whether any particular quantity of happiness with which he is blessed, is pure and unmixed, or only the clear excess of his enjoyments above his sufferings, or whether larger capacities of enjoyment are given him, with proportionable deductions of sufferings, or narrower capacities, without any such deductions.’ To the same purport, Dr Balguy has said (*Divine Benevolence Asserted*, Part 1), ‘ It was kindness, not

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malice, to intend a *mixed* system with a superior tendency to good, just as much as to produce a *smaller* degree of good, unmixed with evil; which, I presume, no one would have denied to be a clear proof of benevolence.'

And if a mixed state, in which there is an excess of happiness over misery, proves the goodness of God, His wisdom is shown by such a state, in making pain and evil subservient, in many ways, to the production and the diffusion of happiness. The use of pain and suffering, in calling forth the social and sympathetic feelings and affections of our nature, and also in heightening the intensity, and giving zest to the enjoyment of pleasure, has already been noticed. But the manifold wisdom of God, as manifested in the present constitution of things, will become more apparent, when the use of pain, as one of the means of moral government, comes to be illustrated in the following chapters. In the meantime, it remains to see what can be said to obviate the difficulties regarding the wisdom and goodness of God, arising from what has been called the last and the greatest of evils, viz. Death.

## SECTION II.

## OF DEATH.

GRANTING that the sum of human happiness exceeds the sum of human misery, and that this excess may be carried over, so to speak, to the account of Divine Benevolence, still, to some, the difficulties regarding the wisdom and goodness of God, arising from physical evil, do not appear to be fully removed ; and they persist in asking, Why is the life of man so short ? and why is he so soon deprived of the little pleasure that is here provided for him ? Scarcely has he looked around him in the world, when his eyes begin to grow dim, and the beauties of creation fade from before him. Scarcely has he taken a few steps in life, when his joints begin to stiffen, and refuse to carry him through his labours. And though his spirit may still fondly linger on the scenes which once delighted him, or proudly struggle through the duties which once engaged him, he must soon retire from all the pleasures and pursuits of the present. The snow falls upon his temples, and the envious earth opens, impatient to receive him. Though he should escape many of the thousand natural ills which flesh is heir to, there is one which he cannot escape. Though he should live many of his short years, and rejoice in them all, he must at last taste the bitterness of death. Though,

in his nature and in his condition, he may be elevated above the brutes, yet in his end he has no pre-eminence ; for one thing befalleth them both ; for, as the one dieth, so dieth the other. High though the rank assigned to man may be, he must be brought down to the dust of death, and yield his fearfully made frame a prey to corruption. Bright though his path through life may be, he must at length tread the dark valley, and shroud his noble faculties amidst its shadows. Now, it is asked, Can a decree so stern and revolting be reconciled with the wisdom of God ? Can an arrangement so humiliating and painful be compatible with the infinite goodness of God ?

In endeavouring to meet this difficulty, it may be proper to attend—

I. To the answers which Reason may furnish.

Now, to this objection, Reason enables us to reply, that the gift of life may be resumed at pleasure by Him who gave it ; and that the shortness of our existence ought not to interrupt our gratitude for the advantages and enjoyments which it confers.

The objection, however, rests chiefly on the pains and inconveniences which accompany or flow from death ; and it is urged, that such an appointment is at variance with the wisdom and goodness of God. It is only from Revelation that we learn how it came to be appointed unto all men once to die. In the meantime, taking death as a fact in the history of man, the



wise and gracious provisions which have been made for bringing about this event, are sufficient to show that it does not proceed from any design, on the part of God, to inflict pain or evil unnecessarily.

The wisdom and goodness of God are manifested,

*a. In concealing from man the time of his death ;*

*b. In the way and manner in which it is ordinarily effected.*

By arranging them under these two heads, some appearance of method may be given to a series of observations, which might otherwise appear desultory and unconnected, though all bearing upon the point in hand.

*a. The wisdom and goodness of God are manifested in concealing from man the time of his death.*

A disposition to pry into futurity, and to become acquainted with the events of their after life, has been found to prevail among men in all ages and in all nations of the world. The means which have been employed for this purpose have been as various as they have been impious and vain. The ancient inhabitants of Canaan seem to have known and practised many arts to discover future events ; for we find Moses warning the Israelites, and saying, ‘ When ye are come into the land which the Lord your God giveth you, you shall not learn to do after the abominations of these nations. There shall not be found among you any one that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a charmer, or a

consulters with familiar spirits, or a necromancer ; for all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord.'—(Deut. xviii. 9–13). The Greeks and Romans also had their oracles, which they consulted on every important occasion ; and, although the responses which they received were always ambiguous, and often utterly incapable of being explained by the event, they still persisted in soliciting and respecting them. The heavenly bodies have been regarded as exercising a powerful influence over the issues of human life ; and, in this view, their movements have been watched in almost every country. Sleep has been considered to be a state in which the soul may pierce through the clouds which conceal futurity from waking eyes, and dreams have been interpreted as certain presages of coming events. Nor have these been the opinions of the ignorant and superstitious only. They have been entertained and defended by men of sense and learning. But never were labour and ingenuity worse applied than in cherishing or exercising an eager curiosity about future events. The formation of our character, and much of our happiness, depend upon our ignorance of what is to befall us. It is in wisdom and in goodness that God hath concealed futurity from our view. It may be easy, indeed, to suppose cases in which a knowledge of the future might be of use to us ; and nothing is more common than to hear men saying, that if they had known what was to happen, they would have been

better prepared for it. It may be fairly doubted, however, whether the removal of that veil which conceals futurity would add to the sum of human virtue, and it would certainly diminish the sum of human happiness. In itself, the weight of calamity would be doubly felt; and the prospect of a coming misfortune would disturb all our previous enjoyments, and damp all our previous exertions. Hope, too, would be deprived of its magic influence; and he, whose spirits might have remained unbroken under a series of unforeseen calamities, might sink overwhelmed under the certain and saddening prospect of them. Had Job, for example, been shown beforehand all the evils which were to befall him, he might not have needed the instigation of another to curse God and die; but, giving his faith to the winds which carried off his wealth, he might have grasped with eagerness the guilty instrument which was to shorten at once his life and his misfortunes. But when these misfortunes came upon him in dark, though close, succession, he was allowed to hope that each one might be the last, and lived to enjoy the returning and redoubled prosperity which awaited him. Even the most fortunate of men, it has been thought, could scarcely endure to have all the events of their future life placed before them; and, to most men, the prospect would be discomposing and painful.

. . . 'How chances mock,  
And changes fill the cup of alteration

With diverse liquors ! O ! if this were seen,  
The happiest youth—viewing his progress through,  
What perils past, what crosses to ensue,  
Would shut the book, and sit him down and die.’

*Shakespeare.*

It is especially happy for men that they are not permitted to know the time of their death. They know that they must die ; but of the time and the circumstances of that event no man knoweth. What is necessary towards the regulation of human conduct is made known ; but what might unnecessarily afflict or distress men, with respect to their latter end, is concealed. It has been remarked, that the instances which are given in Scripture of individuals having been made acquainted, beforehand, with the time of their death, were followed by the most melancholy effects. When Saul heard from Samuel that he would be slain in the approaching battle, he fell straightway all along upon the earth, and was sore afraid. When Peter told Sapphira that the feet of those who buried her husband were at the door, and should carry her out, she fell down straightway, and yielded up the ghost. So that it would appear, that to reveal to men the time and circumstances of their death, would have the effect of diminishing their happiness, without increasing their vigilance or their virtue. By the removal of that veil which conceals futurity from their view, the business and enjoyment of the world would be equally interrupted.



‘Heaven from all creatures hides the book of fate,  
All but the page prescribed, their present state,  
From brutes what men, from men what spirits know,  
Or who would suffer being here below ?  
The lamb thy riot dooms to bleed to-day,  
Had he thy reason, would he skip and play ?  
Pleased to the last, he crops the flowery food,  
And licks the hand just raised to shed its blood.  
O ! blindness to the future ! kindly given,  
That each may fill the circle marked by Heaven.’

POPE, *Essay on Man*.

The drama of human life could not be managed without the aid of darkness. If the actors knew their several fates, they would be unable or unwilling to go through their several parts. Numerous illustrations of this may be drawn from history, both sacred and profane, and from ordinary life.

Moses might have fallen from his meekness sooner than he did, if he had known beforehand that the obstinacy and ingratitude of his people were to detain him, for forty years, amidst the perils and privations of a wilderness—that he was never to enter the land of Canaan, which had been to him the subject of so many promises and hopes—that, after treading the foundations of the parted deep, he was not to cross the peaceful channels of the Jordan—that, after fighting the battles, and dispensing the bounties of the Lord, he was not to be permitted to sit down in laurelled peace, to sing his last song within the borders of Judah, or to breathe his last sigh before the

sorrowing thousands of Israel—but, instead of rising from his earthly toils in a chariot of blazing triumph, was to be taken away to his reward in the midst of judgment and darkness.

Jonathan would not have ascended with such ardour the mountains of Gilboa, if he had known, that from those fatal heights he was to witness the discomfiture of his country and the death of his father, and that he himself was never to descend to meet the embrace of that friend who loved him as his own soul, but was to find an early and an unhonoured grave among the crags of the rock.

David would have felt more reluctance to leave the peaceful innocence of the shepherd life, and to fulfil the high destinies which awaited him, had he known that he was to be hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, and that his life was to hang continually in doubt before him—that he was to be the blameless object of a capricious tyrant's jealousy and revenge—that after Saul was dead, and all his enemies subdued—after he was firmly established in the throne of his country, and the hearts of his people, rebellion was to arise in his own family—that the son in whom he delighted was to stand up against him, and that the mild radiance of his closing day was to be darkened by grief and blood.

Would that conqueror of classic antiquity (Cræsus) have penetrated into the inhospitable deserts of the burning East, if he had known that, after all the riches

and triumphs which he had obtained, his army was to be routed and his son slain, and he himself to perish ignominiously in a foreign land?

Would that other, who was at once a conqueror and a statesman (Julius Cæsar), have borne the toils and dangers of his eventful life, if he had foreseen that he was to fall in the Senate, whose measures he had so often guided by his bravery or his eloquence, in the presence of his unresisting centurions, and by the daggers of the very men who had shared his friendship, his victories, and his generosity?

Or, to descend to more humble illustration—

Would that builder press on the labourers to finish his mansion, if he knew that he must die without once supping in those halls which he is so eager to adorn? Would that merchant tempt the perils of the ocean, if he knew that he and his wealth were to be swallowed up together, and all his glowing anticipations of ease and retirement quenched amidst its treacherous billows? Would that scholar bend o'er the midnight lamp, and waste the lustre of his generous eye in exploring the dim pages of learning, if he knew that all his prospects, how bright soever they might open, were to close in darkness—that poverty and neglect were to be his bitter portion—that hope deferred was to make him sick at heart—and that, after drooping and withering over the productions of his genius, he must sink into an early grave, with no reward but the tardy whisperings of an almost posthumous fame? Or,

would that parent feast and rejoice at the birth of his son, if he knew that his joy was so soon to be turned into mourning—that the object of his prayers and hopes was to be torn from him in infancy, and that he himself was soon to go childless and heirless to the grave?

If the time of our dissolution were known to us, and we carried upon our foreheads the day of our latter end, our interest in the business, and our relish for the enjoyments of life, would be alike diminished. If the fatal day were near, it would damp all our faculties and discourage all our exertions, leaving upon the mind a gloom and horror too great for reason and reflection to remove; and, with the sword perpetually hanging above our heads, the feast of life would cease to please. In the bosom of our families, what melancholy feelings would arise from the near and certain prospect of a separation! And, others being in the same condition with ourselves, equally acquainted and equally alarmed with their approaching departure, mankind would be kept in a state of constant fermentation and dismay, totally incompatible with the order and business of the world, and totally inconsistent with the discharge of its duties or the enjoyment of its pleasures.

‘Too busy man would find his sorrows more,  
If future fortunes he could know before;  
For, by that knowledge of his destiny,  
He would not live at all—but always die.’

*Dryden.*



How much more wise and gracious the appointment of God, how much more conducive is it to our virtue and our happiness, that we are kept in a state of darkness and uncertainty, with regard to the time and the circumstances of our death. God baffles all our foolish devices, and eludes all our idle curiosity concerning that event, because He wishes us to be watchful and happy; and, if the time of its occurrence were made more clear or certain than it is, it would only make us more careless and wretched. If the pilgrims, who are continually treading the dark valley, were selected by any more obvious rule than they are at present—if, for example, one generation were regularly to be removed before another—if the fathers were always to take precedence of their children in this melancholy procession—if the farthest on the list of life were uniformly to be first struck off—the fixedness and formality of such an arrangement would produce incalculable mischief. It would take away from the old every means of cheerfulness, and, instead of maintaining their spirits to the last, the approaching shadows of death would wrap them in impenetrable gloom. Nor would this gloom be confined to themselves, but it would extend to their relatives and friends; and every step which they advanced towards the close of their life would be echoed by the groans of those who knew not how to part with them. The young, too, would be great losers by such an arrangement. They would lose the wisdom and the counsels of age, and,

instead of the improving mixture of the old and young —instead of the blended beauties of spring and autumn —instead of the interesting and useful spectacles of experience instructing ignorance, of caution restraining rashness, of gravity checking giddiness, of youth directed by the prudence of age, and of age supported by the strength of youth—the face of our society would present only the discordant features of growth and decay, of thoughtlessness and despondency. How much more conducive to human happiness and to human improvement is the existing arrangement. None are marked out as the next victims ; but all are permitted to live in the discharge of their duty and in the enjoyment of hope. The sick are consoled amidst their sufferings with the prospect of future health ; for He who bringeth down to the gates of death can also bring up from the gates of death, and frequently gives examples of the most unexpected recoveries. The old need not despair, for how far soever they may have advanced in the journey of life, they still see before them a point to which others have attained. The dark shadows are not let down upon them, till they enter the valley of death. The means of happiness are only removed with their existence ; and every drop in the cup of life may be enjoyed, before they come to taste the bitterness of death. Yet no encouragement is given to carelessness and security. Instances of sudden death are exhibited to keep men always on their guard. Were these instances wanting, the

strong and healthy, who need most to be warned and checked, might live without thought or fear. But, when they see that health and strength can afford them no security, and that the young, whose bones are full of marrow, may die, as well as those who are old and stricken in years, they are, or should be, chastened into those views and feelings which become their nature and condition, and are shown what manner of persons they ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness.

It deserves, however, to be remarked, as a further illustration of the wisdom and goodness of God, that, ‘if sudden deaths were frequent, the sense of our constant danger would be too strong to allow of that ease and enjoyment which are intended for us, and human life would be too precarious for the business and interest which belong to it. There would not be sufficient dependence, either upon our own lives, or the lives of others, to carry on the regular duties of society. But the manner in which death is made to occur, conduces to the purposes of admonition, without overthrowing the necessary stability of human affairs: and we are warned of the frailty and precariousness of our condition, without being shaken out of its duties and enjoyments.’

This leads to show how the wisdom and goodness of God are manifested,

*b. In the way and manner in which death is ordinarily effected.*

Death has always been regarded as an object of terror. Much of this terror may be illusion ; but it has upon us all the effect of reality. When we stand by the open grave, and see the body of a friend or relative ready to be let down into its dark and dripping sides, we shudder and recoil from the prospect. We shrink back from the loathsomeness of the fattened earth, and cannot think, but with horror, of making the dust our bed, the worm our companion, and corruption our covering. Now, the dead corpse can feel nothing of all this. The spirit, which was the source and seat of sensation, does not descend into the grave. It is only dust that is added to dust—earth to earth ; yet the fall of the first clod upon the coffin-lid goes to our heart, as if it were our own funeral-knell ; and, fanciful and unfounded as the associations and feelings which rise up within us are, we can scarcely prevent them from affecting us as realities. We are apt to be dejected, too, by the thought of the little alteration which our own death will occasion. It grieves us to think, that the sun shall rise with equal strength and beauty, to run his healthful and vivifying course—that the seasons shall return to pour forth their bounties in wonted profusion—and that men shall go forth as usual to their pleasures and occupations, while we must sink forgotten, amidst the darkness and captivity of the tomb. In all this, there may be weakness and illusion ; yet it seldom fails to affect men, as Hezekiah was affected, who, when warned of his approaching



death, turned his face unto the wall, and wept bitterly, saying, 'I shall see man no more in the land of the living.'—2 Kings xx. 2, 3; Isaiah xxxviii. 11.

Indeed, death, when considered as a separation from much that we have been accustomed to value and to hold dear, is truly an object of apprehension. 'Weep for the dead, for they have lost the light—they have gone to a land of darkness, where even the light is as darkness.'—Ecclus. xxii. 11. Death takes men away from the pursuits which animated, the possessions which pleased, the enjoyments which gratified, and the friends who delighted them. It carries them from the familiar contemplations, and the experienced comforts of the present state, to a state with which they have had no intercourse, and from which they can hear no tidings. A sense of their frailty and their folly begins to stir within them at the prospect; and, their attachment to what they know of this life, and their ignorance of what may befall them in the next, combine to render their dissolution an object of apprehension and dislike. Nor is it without good reason that men are thus made to fear the approach of death. God hath planted no unnecessary terrors in the dark valley, through which they are appointed to pass. That instinctive horror with which men start back from every thing which threatens to injure life, or to hasten death, keeps them continually on their guard, against the many evil accidents to which they are exposed. The love of life, which is so deeply and so

firmly fixed in their bosom, reconciles them to the hardships, and animates them to the labours of their lot. Nothing but terror—and, in many instances, nothing but the terror of death—could keep men firmly in their stations. Were there no darkness—no fears hanging over the invisible world, at every little disappointment or vexation, men might fly from their post. Were the valley of death free from shadows—were their removal from this life attended with no apprehension or inconvenience, every trifling insult or injury might lead men to rush unprepared to their eternal habitations : and since neither affection, nor a sense of duty, are sufficient to check the violence of passion, God hath wisely employed terror to keep men in their stations :—

Wisely this fear is rooted in the heart,  
Even in that which knows no nobler rule ;  
If not, when hopeless anguish said depart,  
When passion stung the proud, contempt the fool,  
What should deter the one till frenzy cool,  
And make the other one brief moment wise ?  
What, but that feeling, learnt in nature's school,  
Which prompts us, spite of sophistry and lies,  
To pause, before we dare a depth no sight desecries.

*Bernard Barton.*

But, while the fear of death is thus necessary and useful, as the safeguard of human life, and the warrant of human duty, that fear is graciously alleviated or removed, when the time of separation between soul and body approaches. Before entering the dark

valley, men are generally conducted through trials, which, while they are calculated to exercise and improve their virtues, tend greatly to diminish their love of life, and in the same proportion their fear of death. Some, it is true, are called away while their pulse is beating high in health and hope; but, generally speaking, men are gradually prepared for their approaching dissolution. The means which are employed for this purpose, by an all-wise Providence, are various.

The infirmities of age—the failing eye, the shaking hand, and tottering frame—are kindly fitted to warn men of the change that awaits them. Unable to encounter the toils and bustle of the world, they feel disposed to retire from a scene where they can no longer act a useful part, or so useful a part as they once did. Perhaps, too, those who began with them the journey of life have already reached its termination. A new generation has risen up around them, in whose pursuits and enjoyments they have little interest or share. They feel themselves to be the men of another age, and wish to be gathered to their fathers. They enter into the spirit of Job, when he said, ‘I would not live always.’—Job vii. 16. And, bending beneath a load of years and infirmities, the weary pilgrims look forward, without fear, and almost with desire, to the time when they shall be permitted to lay down their burden and retire to their bed of rest.

✱ Misfortune, too, is often made the means of pro-

ducing the like happy effects upon men. When they are deprived of their property and influence, and reduced to a state of comparative obscurity and indigence, life begins to lose its attractions, and death its terrors. When they can no longer mingle in the society, follow the pursuits, or obtain the accommodations to which they have been accustomed, they are more disposed for leaving a scene, which now only reminds them of former joys. And should the treachery of pretended friends, or the malice of open enemies be added to their misfortunes, the terror of death is greatly diminished; and they look forward, without regret, to that last retreat, 'where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.' Thus, under the government of infinite wisdom and goodness, even wounded feelings and disappointed hopes—the bitterest of human griefs—are not altogether without use.

'Death,' said Lord Bacon, 'comes graciously to those who sit in darkness, or lie heavily burdened with grief and irons—to desolate widows, pensive prisoners, and deposed kings; to them whose fortunes run back, and whose spirits mutiny—to all such, death is a redeemer, and the grave a place of retirement and rest.'

But the great instrument employed by a Wise and Gracious Providence, to detach men from the love of life, is sickness. Were they called to enter on the dark valley, while high in health and spirits, surrounded with every means of enjoyment, and in pos-



session of every relish for life, their removal would be accompanied with much more bitterness and grief than it usually is. Pain has the power of breaking down the proudest spirits, and preparing them, in some measure, for the change that awaits them. There is a wonderful difference between the feelings with which men regard death in the season of health, and those with which they view it from a sick-bed. In proportion as they approach it, they begin to see light even in the dark valley, while the world, which once seemed so fair, appears to fade and vanish. The objects which formerly delighted them now lose their power to please. To the dull ear of sickness, music has no charms, and eloquence no beauty. To the dim eye of disease, gold has no lustre, and even the fair face of nature can convey no pleasure. The dusky twilight of the chamber of death withdraws the world from their view, and prepares men for the falling of the last deep shadows. The closed shutter and the drawn curtain exclude, even from their eyes, those vanities which can no longer find a resting place in their hearts; and, with regard to the objects of its former affection, their soul has become even like a weaned child. The ties which bound them down to earth are gradually loosened, till, at last, there is but a feeble thread to break, when they pass away and are at rest. And, perhaps, after all, the parting agony of nature, which we are apt to regard with so much horror, is by no means so full of pain as we imagine

it to be.<sup>1</sup> The separation between a weaned soul and a weakened body cannot occasion any very violent shock. The agitation and contortion which accompany some diseases, as epilepsy, and which never fail deeply to affect the beholder, are not felt by the patient, who awakes like one who dreamed. Now, death is frequently preceded by so much exhaustion and weakness, that it comes, like the last of a long series of changes, without occasioning any violent transition; and any agony that is felt must arise more from apprehension than from any actual pain.

But it might have been the arrangement of Providence to tear men from the world when their attachments were strongest, their hopes brightest, and their feelings of separation likely to be most acute; without any weakening or monitory preparation. And, since the sentence of death cannot be reversed, the use of sickness and adversity, in the mode of carrying it into effect, should be regarded as a proof of wisdom and goodness on the part of God. Hence we find the Psalmist, when he felt the infirmities of age coming upon him, devoutly exclaimed, ‘I will bless the Lord,

<sup>1</sup> ‘There are not a few who imagine death attended with insufferable pangs and agony to their relations in their dying moments, and hence, perhaps, their disturbance, which gives me very little uneasiness. . . For the very separation of the soul from the body is either attended with little uneasiness, or none at all, and sometimes happens without the least sensibility; nay, frequently, if we judge rightly, and live wisely, with pleasure.’

—CICERO, *De Consolatione*—Translated by Dr Blacklock, p. 28.

who hath given me warning ; my reins instruct me in the night season.'—Ps. xvi. 7.

In endeavouring to obviate the difficulties regarding the wisdom and goodness of God, which arise from the existence of death among His works, no views have yet been advanced but such as the light of reason furnishes. Considering it merely as a physical fact or event in the history of man, it has been shown, from the way in which death is usually effected, that it gives no indication, on the part of God, unnecessarily to inflict pain. On the contrary, there are proofs of great wisdom and goodness in the manner of bringing it about. The sentence is executed in a way which not merely proves that it proceeds from no malignity in the Judge, but which proves, on the contrary, that, while He strikes, He sustains and pities. But, in order more fully to vindicate the ways of God to man, it may be proper to look to the account which revelation gives of the origin of death, and of the provisions which have been made for enabling man, not merely to bear it, but to triumph over it.

## II.

Revelation assures us that God, in His great benignity, made man immortal, and that he became mortal through sin. 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon

all men, for all have sinned.'—Rom. v. 12. Now, it is surely no valid objection against the wisdom or the goodness of God, that He executes a sentence which He had previously denounced, and which man had incurred. It would have been a fairer and firmer ground of impeachment against these Divine perfections, if, after having become sinful, men had been permitted to live on, and thus to have perpetuated the existence and the increase of evil. Death is the wages of sin. It is the righteous and wise appointment of God concerning a race of creatures who have transgressed His laws. It is the debt of our erring nature; and the goodness of God is not to be looked for in discharging it, while it is abundantly manifested in mitigating the payment of it. Had man remained free from sin, his removal from this life—if such removal had been necessary for the progress and improvement of his being—might have been effected without pain, and instead of being, as it is now, an object of apprehension and dislike, might have been an object of desire and delight. But sin hath given to death a sting, and hath rendered our passage from this life dark and painful. Yet, even in this necessary and penal dispensation, there are evident traces of the wisdom and the goodness of God. The shadows of death must fall on us; but they are made to fall with softened and mitigated horror. The dark valley must be trodden; but rays of Divine mercy are let in upon it. And, although our dissolution must



always be regarded as penal in its origin and painful in itself, we are not to fear it as an intolerable evil; for when we leave this state of imperfect enjoyment, the Shepherd of Israel is with us, and His rod and His staff are stretched out to comfort and support us.—

Ps. xxiii. 4. We may commit our souls with confidence unto Him, as unto a faithful Creator.—1 Pet. iv.

19. For thus saith the Lord. Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry and deliver you.—Isa. xlv. 4.

Even under the dumb and shadowy dispensation of the Old Testament, a voice was heard, saying, ‘Oh, death! I will be thy plague—Oh, grave! I will be thy destruction.’—Hos. iii. 14. The patriarchs, and prophets, and holy men of old, all lived above the fear of death, and died strong in the faith of immortality. But types and figures have given way before the substance and reality, and life and immortality have been brought to light by the Gospel. Christ came, that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. By His dying, He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and delivered them, who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. He ‘ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, and obtained gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them.’—Ps. lxviii. 18. ‘For where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin had reigned unto

death, through our mortal bodies, even so might grace reign through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ.'—Rom. v. 20, 21. Through faith in Him, the life that now is, is converted into one continued course of holy walking and of high communion with God; and the life that is to come is furnished with a theme of everlasting adoration and praise, in the manifestation that has been made of the mercies of redeeming love. With such privileges and such prospects, death is viewed by the Christian as a vanquished foe, which, like a bruised serpent, can only wound him in the heel. He can, without regret, leave in the grave the exuviae of his worn-out frame, for the angel of darkness to exult over, when he knows that he is to have a body fashioned after the likeness of the glorious body of Christ, and to take his place among that innumerable company, gathered out of every kindred and country, who stand around the throne, and sing, 'Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever.'—Rev. vii. 12.

It is recorded of one of the emperors of Rome, that, when he heard of any one who had died speedily, and without severe or protracted suffering or pain, he expressed a wish, that such a εὐθανασία, or easy death, should be appointed to him and to all his friends.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nam fere quoties audisset, cito aut nullo cruciatu defunctum quempiam, sibi et suis εὐθανάσιαν similem precabatur.

SUETONIUS, in *Vit. August.* 99.

But how much higher and more ardent would have been his wish, if he had seen, or known, the peace in which a Christian can die. ‘Mark the perfect, and behold the upright : for the latter end of that man is peace.’—Ps. xxxvii. 37. ‘Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.’—Ps. xcvii. 11. The dawnings of that glory which awaits them, break forth even here ; and the rays of consolation and of hope, which gild and cheer the deathbed of the just, proclaim how clear is the sky, and how unclouded is the day upon which they are entering. Their faith cleaves the clouds before their departing spirit ; and, like Stephen, they see Jesus standing at the right hand of God. When the earthly house of their tabernacle is dissolving, and the elements of their mortal body returning to their primitive dust, they are exulting and saying, ‘O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law ; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.’—1 Cor. xv. 55–57.

## CHAPTER III.

## OF MORAL EVIL.

MORAL evil supposes a law. It supposes one having authority, enjoining and prohibiting, and those who are under this authority, having power to do or not to do. Obedience to the law is virtue, rectitude, or moral good; disobedience is vice, wickedness, or moral evil. That man is under law, and that he disobeys that law—that vice or wickedness abounds in the world, cannot be denied. And the difficulty which presents itself is, How can the existence of moral evil be reconciled with the wisdom and goodness, the holiness and justice of God? In endeavouring to obviate this difficulty, it is necessary to ascertain the origin of moral evil.

Now, everything that is called into existence is called into existence under a law. It is what it is, by having a definite nature, and being fitted to answer some end. Material things have their laws, according to which their various properties are manifested, and their various uses fulfilled. Living and organized



beings have their laws, according to which they live and grow. The inferior animals are under the guidance of instinct, which God is said, in Scripture, to have given to them as a law. In yielding to this law, they attain to that degree of happiness of which they are capable. Man, as an intelligent being, was created, not under the law of undiscerning and un-deviating instinct, but under a law suited to a moral agent. He was endowed with knowledge, to understand that the perfection and happiness of his nature lay in conformity to the will of God, and with power to obey or to disobey the declarations of that will. He disobeyed, and fell from his first estate, into an estate of sin and misery, of disobedience and its consequences. By the first transgression human nature was injured and corrupted, and moral evil, with all its baleful effects, introduced and propagated in the world. The cause or origin of moral evil, then, is to be found, not in God, but in moral agents, that is, agents capable of good or of evil, and who, by an abuse or perversion of the law of liberty under which they were created, chose the evil.

Admitting this reply, to the extent of explaining the way in which moral evil originated, the difficulty has been urged in a higher form; and it has been asked, Why did God call beings into existence who were capable of disobeying the law under which they were created, and of abusing the liberty wherewith they had been endowed?

Now, it appears that men are not the only beings who have been endowed with moral liberty, and have abused it. We read in Scripture of the angels who kept not their first estate. To an humble inquirer this fact naturally suggests the question, Whether, in all created beings, moral evil be not necessarily connected with moral good, and whether they could be called into existence capable of the one, without at the same time being liable to the other? A very little reflection may satisfy any one that this is impossible. Material things must obey the laws to which they have been created subject. Living and organised beings must grow and develop themselves, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit, and the moving creature that hath life, each after its kind. And we never blame nor praise the inferior animals for yielding to their instincts, as they have no knowledge nor power to do otherwise. But the law of moral agents is the law of liberty, with power to do or not to do—to do this or to do that. They are morally good, because they may be morally evil. We praise them when they do right, because they might have done wrong; and we blame them when they do wrong, because they might and ought to have done right. Of God only can it be said, that He does what is right, without the possibility of doing wrong. The absolute rectitude of His nature is the law of His government; and, to use the language of the judicious Hooker, ‘that perfection which God is,

that perfection He *doeth*.<sup>1</sup> But no created being can possess absolute perfection. Even the most exalted of God's intelligent creatures, who have hitherto kept their first estate, cannot as creatures be pronounced to be absolutely beyond the possibility of falling from it. The trial which they have already undergone, and the right use which they have hitherto made of their liberty, may make it, so to speak, *morally* impossible that they should ever abuse their liberty ; so that their future path may be like the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. But this progress in moral excellence, which is gradually confirmed into steadfastness, implies, that while obedience is possible, disobedience is not impossible. In short, if moral agents were to have any place in the universe of God, they must, in being made capable of moral good, at the same time be liable to moral evil. The possibility of the one implies the possibility of the other.

But it is further asked, Although moral agents, as creatures, are liable to moral evil, might not the Creator have so upheld them as to have prevented them from falling into it? Might not God have so

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Aquinas had said long before (*Sum. Theol., Pars Prima, Quaest. XIX., Art. 1*), 'Sicut suum intelligere est suum esse, ita et suum esse est suum velle.' And *ibid.*, Art. 4: 'Quia essentia Dei est ejus intelligere et velle.' According to these passages, the will of God is identical with His intelligence, as both are with His being.

enlightened their powers of knowing, and so directed their power of choosing, that they must have known and chosen what was morally good, and never have made a wrong use of the liberty wherewith they were endowed? Now, it would be rash to say, that God could not or might not have done so. But it is easy to see that, by doing so, He would have altered the nature and condition of His intelligent creatures, who could not have been called, or considered to be, moral agents, inasmuch as any good which they did was not morally good, not being done of their own free choice; and inasmuch as any evil from which they were kept, it was not morally in their power to do. Under such an arrangement the varied beauties of the moral world would have had no place; and it is difficult to see how any perfection of God, except that of power, or any act of God, except that of dominion, could have been manifested. His intelligent creatures would have had no need and no encouragement to cultivate and improve their faculties, and could not have experienced the satisfaction and reward which follow the right and successful use of them. Rational beings, having no occasion to exercise their reason, must have acted under an absolute and fatal necessity, and have been as incapable of progress and improvement as the inferior animals, who are guided and governed by instinct, and as incapable of free choice as the material elements, which can only move in obedience to the force impressed upon them. Rous-



seau, who is a favourite author with those who find fault with the wisdom and goodness of the Divine arrangements, has expressed himself to the following effect upon this point.—*Emile*, Liv. iv., tom. ii., p. 50 :—

‘To complain that God hath not prevented the human race from doing wrong, is to complain that He hath created man of an excellent nature—that He hath put a morality in his actions, which ennobles them, and that He hath given him the privilege of being virtuous. The highest satisfaction is in the approbation of our own mind; it is to deserve and obtain this approbation that we have been placed on earth, and endowed with liberty—that we are tempted by our passions, and restrained by our conscience. What more could Divine Power have done in our behalf? Could it have inserted a contradiction in our nature, and given the reward of having done good to him who had not the power to have done evil. What! to prevent man from being wicked, was it necessary to limit him to instinct, and to make of him a brute? No, God of my soul! I will never reproach Thee for having made me after Thine own image, in order that I might be free, good, and happy as Thou art.’ God hath done all that could be done for His rational and responsible creatures. He hath set before them life and death—a blessing and a curse; and hath called on them to choose between them. What the prophet has represented Him as saying, in reference to the people of Israel, may be

applied to all His intelligent creatures.—(Isa. v. 4). ‘What could have been done more to My vineyard that I have not done in it?’ First to have called into being moral agents, to have endowed them with rational liberty, and then to have interfered with the exercise of it, would have been undoing what had been done. It would have been giving, and yet withholding the free use of the gift. Such conduct would have been altogether inconsistent with the wisdom and goodness of God. But these perfections are conspicuously displayed in allowing to moral agents the free use of the faculties with which they have been endowed, and yet so over-ruling all things, as to promote His own glory, and to advance the happiness of His creatures. He maketh even the wrath of man to praise Him, and restrains the remainder or mitigates the consequences thereof. Under His administration, evil, both physical and moral, is made an instrument of good. Pain and suffering, and even vice and wickedness, become occasions of showing more clearly the manifold wisdom and unbounded goodness of God. But while these perfections are conspicuously displayed in the moral government of the world, it is when regarded as a moral governor, that difficulties, concerning the wisdom and goodness of God, have been most painfully experienced, and most bitterly expressed. It will be necessary and proper, therefore, to treat this part of the subject at considerable length, and with considerable minuteness.

## CHAPTER IV.

OF THE EVIDENCES AND MEASURES OF MORAL  
GOVERNMENT IN THE WORLD.

ACCORDING to Bishop Butler (*Analogy*, Pt. i. ch. ii.), 'The proper, formal, notion of government, is the annexing pleasure to some actions, and pain to others, in our power to do or forbear, and giving notice of this appointment beforehand to those whom it concerns.' And (ch. iii.) 'Moral government consists, not barely in rewarding and punishing men for their actions, which the most tyrannical person may do, but in rewarding the righteous, and punishing the wicked; in rendering to men according to their actions, considered as good or evil.'

Now, difficulties have been felt regarding the wisdom and goodness, and the holiness and justice of God, in reference to His moral government. This world, it has been said, presents few, if any, indications, of being under such a government. 'All things come alike to all. As is the good, so is the bad; and he that sweareth as he that feareth an oath. There

is one event to the righteous and to the wicked. It often happeneth to a righteous man according to the portion of a wicked man, and to a wicked man according to the portion of a righteous man. Yea, the rod of the wicked lies upon the back of the righteous; and while the one is depressed by poverty and injustice, the other is exulting in prosperity and abundance.' From this state of things, some have been disposed to doubt, or to deny the existence of God; while others have concluded that He is altogether indifferent to the concerns of His creatures, and that He has drawn the clouds around Him, as a curtain, to shut out their clamours. Even pious men have found it difficult to reconcile the appearances which the world sometimes presents with the government of a wise and gracious, a just and holy Being. The contemplation of this matter has at times so perplexed them, as to make them weary in well-doing. The patriarch (Job xxi. 6) has told us, that, when he remembered it, trembling took hold of his flesh, and he cried out—'Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?' The Psalmist has acknowledged (Ps. lxxiii. 2), that, when he thought of it, his feet were almost gone, and his steps had well nigh slipped, for he was envious at the foolish; when he saw the prosperity of the wicked, he was ready to cry out, 'Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.' In like manner, the heart of the prophet waxed hot within him, and



he cried out (Jer. xii. 1), ‘Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy who deal very treacherously?’ To guard against such injurious and distressing views of the Providence of God, it becomes necessary to show, at the very outset, that men are naturally under Divine government, and that the measures of this government are moral; that is, have respect to men’s actions, as right or wrong—as good or evil. And the wisdom and goodness, the justice and holiness of God are manifested in instituting and carrying out these measures. The statement and illustration of them will best show the existence and character of His moral government in the world.

Men are contemplated, by the government of God, as moral agents, from the moment of their birth to that of their death.

*I. The state of subjection and dependence in which men are born into this world is a proof that they are under the government of God, and a means of carrying forward that government.*

Our natural helplessness leads us to lean on those who are stronger, while it prompts them to help us. We are not left to struggle into manhood by our own feeble and ill-directed efforts, but are sustained and guided by those whose strength and experience enable them to do so. The gratitude and love which we cherish towards the authors of our being, and the

guardians of our childhood and youth, give weight and efficacy to all their instructions ; and we submit, with patience, to the corrections and reproofs of a father. There can be no doubt that this paternal authority is an institution, on the part of God, for the encouragement of virtue and the punishment of vice. Wherever that authority is wisely exercised, the most salutary effects follow. That authority, it is true, is often perverted and abused, and rendered productive of the most unhappy consequences. But this is just one of the many proofs of the moral and responsible nature of man, viz., that he may make a good or a bad use of the gifts and arrangements of God. It does not show, however, that these gifts and arrangements are not in themselves wise and good. The natural subjection of children to their parents, the love which parents have for their offspring, the desire which they cherish to promote their happiness, the opportunities which they have of instructing and guiding them, and the authority which they have to restrain and check them ; these arrangements are all favourable to virtue and to moral government. They may not always produce their full and proper effect ; but the intention and operation of them are obviously wise and good. Suppose these arrangements to have been wanting, suppose the children to have been restrained by no love nor reverence for their parents, and parents to have been animated with no affection, and armed with no authority over their children, it is

plain that the moral character and conduct of men would have been greatly inferior to what they now are. These arrangements, therefore, in reference to the great human family, by which the vices of the young are checked and punished, and their virtues rewarded and encouraged, and by which, at the same time, the conduct of parents and others invested with a natural authority, is exalted and purified, should be regarded as proofs and measures of a moral government. They show that men, from the very commencement of their being, are subject to the operation of moral influences. The authority of the parent is an authority delegated from Him who is the Father of all the families of the earth; and delegated obviously for the purpose of promoting the great ends of His moral government—the punishment and correction of what is wrong—the encouragement and reward of what is right.

II. *The same thing may be said of the subordinations and arrangements of civil society.*

These arrangements, it is true, have been different in different places, and at different times; because, although the great and leading principles of morality are the same, in all places and at all times, circumstances have affected and modified their application and use. Practices have been permitted in one country which have been denounced in another; but still the inhabitants of both countries agreed, that there was an original distinction between right and wrong;

and the difference of laws and customs has arisen from a difference of circumstances, which has led them to a different application of the principles acknowledged by both. And, notwithstanding many mournful deviations, it will be admitted, that the general aim of all civil society has been, to punish vice and to reward virtue. The origin, indeed, of all civil society has been referred by some to a desire to do justice—to protect the weak in the possession of his rights—and to resist the oppression of the powerful. All human laws propose this as their end and aim. Now, although these laws are necessarily imperfect, both in themselves and in the administration of them—in themselves, because they originate in the wisdom and in the policy of men, whose moral principles and feelings are liable to be perverted; and in their administration, because, from being in the hands of men, it is liable to be abused; yet still the tendency and operation of law and government have been, upon the whole, favourable to virtue and unfavourable to vice. No one will deny, that the moral condition of man would be much worse than it is, without the checks and restraints, and the protection and encouragement, of civil society. Now, it is natural to man to seek the protection and aid which society can give. He is a social being. He is so constituted as to delight in the converse of his fellow-creatures. Civil society, and the arrangements to which it gives rise, may, therefore, be called the ordinance of God. Not that any particular form of



civil polity or government can claim to be of Divine appointment ; but, because the principles and propensities which lead men to form themselves into society, and to frame laws for their mutual protection and improvement, are implanted by God, and implanted for that purpose ; for the punishment of evil doers, and for the protection of them that do well. These principles and propensities, and the laws and regulations to which they give rise, may thus be referred to God ; and the original constitution of man, as well as the condition and circumstances in which he has been placed, all indicate a moral and judicial intention on the part of his Maker. Man was evidently designed for a state of law and government ; that is, a state in which vice should be restrained and punished, and virtue encouraged and protected. That this is the general tendency and effect of law and government cannot be denied. So that, whether we look to the original social constitution of man, or to the arrangements which that constitution has given rise to, we have evidence of the moral character of God, and of the moral nature of His government. In proportion as the laws of civil society are good and just, the effect of them will be good and just. But the simple fact of man being so constituted as to become subject to law, is a proof that he is a moral and responsible being ; while the additional fact, that the general aim and issue of all human laws have been favourable to virtue and unfavourable to vice, is a proof that, amidst all

the darkness and obstruction of our present state, the great moral purposes of God's Providence are silently but constantly advancing.

III. *The arrangements of civil society, for the punishment of vice and for the protection of virtue, are supplemented and enforced by the natural feelings of the human heart.*

It is scarcely possible for human policy to devise, or for human power to execute, punishment, against all the varying forms of human wickedness. Under the best formed and the best administered laws, some things deserving of punishment will escape, or be overlooked. But although the letter of the law may not reach such actions, they awaken feelings of indignation and contempt, which often form a heavier punishment than any which the law can administer. They who escape the penalties of human law, and brave the authority of human power, do so only to incur the disgrace and reproach which their conduct deserves. And when they find themselves despised and shunned by all whose approbation is of any value, they are checked and restrained in their flagitious course. On the other hand, they who have suffered from the severity and injustice which is often mixed up with human law, are consoled and cheered when they find themselves supported by the sympathy of the wise and good. Now, these feelings of our nature, which thus rise up in aid of what is defective in human law, are a

strong proof of our being constituted moral beings. And the effect which these feelings have in abashing the wicked, and in encouraging the virtuous, are an equally strong proof that we are under a moral government. The operation of these feelings is much more powerful and extensive than is usually imagined. Many a wicked man, who seems to set the law at defiance, shrinks in secret shame and punishment from the frown of the righteous. And many a good man, who has suffered oppression and injustice, which no law can remedy, has been more than recompensed by the sympathy and the kindness which his sufferings have called forth. The provision, which is thus made in our nature, for following virtue and vice beyond the broad and marked lines of human law and government, is a striking indication of our being constituted moral agents, and also of our being under a moral government. We are the instruments of carrying on the measures of that government, by the feelings of approbation and sympathy, or of indignation and contempt, which we manifest towards the good or bad conduct of others.

IV. The feelings, which we thus judicially exercise towards others, are also excited by our own conduct. *And the individual and private power of conscience is another proof of our moral constitution; and its exercise another proof of our being under a moral government.*

The same reasons which lead us to approve or

condemn the good or bad conduct of those around us, should lead us much more to judge ourselves. Conscience exercises a powerful sway within us, and its power is all in favour of virtue, and against vice. Its decisions may be questioned, and its warnings disregarded, for a time, but, in the end, it is sure to resume its right and its supremacy. The endowing us with such a principle is a proof that God loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity. The operation of the principle is powerful and extensive, although, from its very nature, it is silent and unseen. He who has incurred the reproach of his conscience does not proclaim it to others, and he who has the testimony of a good conscience, enjoys it in secret. But, if the operations of conscience were all known, it would be seen to be a great agent in carrying forward the moral administration of Providence. It takes cognizance of all our actions. It is favourable to virtue and unfavourable to vice, and no external circumstances can prevent it from pronouncing sentence. It may be stifled, it may be stupified and deadened; or, on the other hand, it may be weak, and too easily or too violently awakened. But, making allowance for all these things, it will be found that conscience is the great guide and governor of the moral world, condemning and punishing the wicked, applauding and animating the righteous. The happiness and misery which it distributes, the reward and punishment which it assigns, are great and extensive, and show that the measures of that moral govern-



ment, to which we are subject, are not easily eluded nor defeated.

And as the mind may be the source and seat of moral reward and punishment, it may be noticed as another proof of the moral nature of the government of God ;

*V. That our bodies are so framed as to be affected in a corresponding manner by our good or bad conduct.*

All those passions and pursuits, which can be pronounced good and praiseworthy, tend, not only to promote the peace and serenity of the mind, but to preserve the health and strength of the body. And, on the other hand, the indulgence of those propensities, which reason and conscience condemn, not only fills the mind with uneasiness and disgust, but the body with disease and pain. It is impossible for any one to pursue a course of intemperance and vice, without feeling, not only from the reproaches of his conscience, but from the languor and decay of his frame, that He who made him meant him to be temperate and happy, and that he cannot violate the arrangements of His Providence without suffering a heavy penalty. The wages of sin is death. And all the ways of sin are just so many approaches to death. Disease and pain, derangement and decay, sickness and languor, are the natural and appointed consequences of intemperance and excess. And, it is plain, that these consequences have been appointed

as punishments and warnings—punishments for having yielded to temptation, and warnings to resist it in future. On the other hand, our bodies are so framed as to be preserved sound and healthful, by the exercise of temperance and sobriety; and, it is equally plain, that this is intended as a reward and encouragement to self-discipline and restraint. These things, it is true, are very often overlooked, as happening according to no rule. But the more they are inquired into, the more will they be found to proceed upon the principles of moral government. Not that every bodily pain is to be viewed as the punishment or the consequence of some sin or misconduct. Nor that exemption from disease and sickness will argue an exemption from sin or misconduct. But, still, the tendency of sin is to enfeeble the body, and to embitter the mind, and the tendency of virtue to strengthen the body, and to prolong and cheer the life. These different tendencies were arranged by the Author of our being; and they prove His love to virtue and His hatred of vice. It is true that these different tendencies are not always fully developed. There are some men whose frames are originally so strong, as not to suffer much from their intemperance and vice. And there are others, with frames so weak, that all the precautions of temperance and virtue cannot strengthen them. But these different tendencies, although not always fully developed, are never interchanged. It is not possible, for example,

that intemperance and vice should promote either the health of the body or the peace of the mind. And, on the other hand, it is not possible that a life of temperance and caution should lead to languor and disease. A man's bodily frame may originally be so strong, as not to suffer much from the excesses of vice; but these excesses can never have any tendency to strengthen it. On the contrary, they will, surely, though insensibly, shake and undermine it. In like manner; the man who lives soberly and temperately may not always enjoy good health, because his bodily constitution is originally weak and sickly. But that weakness and sickness are not the consequence of his temperance and self-restraint. On the contrary, but for his temperance and self-restraint, his frame would sink and become weaker. There are great original differences of bodily endowment. But these original differences should not blind us to the different tendency and effect of virtuous and vicious conduct. If a vicious man continues for a time to enjoy health of body, it is *in spite*, not in *consequence*, of his vicious conduct, just as plainly as when he enjoys something like peace of mind, in spite of the clamours and accusations of his conscience. For, the effect of vice is to disturb the health of the body, as plainly as it is to disturb the peace of the mind. And, on the other hand, when a virtuous man does not enjoy good health, it is not *because* he is sober and temperate; but because temperance and sobriety

cannot altogether strengthen and confirm a frame which was originally weak. But temperance and sobriety do not make it more weak. They do not assail it with languor and disease. On the contrary, although unable to build it up into perfect and robust health, they sustain, in comparative comfort, a frame which the practices of vice would shatter in pieces. Wisdom carries in her right hand length of days, although there are some who follow her so feebly that they cannot attain to it. And the ways of sin are ways which lead down to the chambers of death, although some who walk in these ways are longer than others in finding their sure and ultimate destination.

Such then are some of the means and measures of God's moral government. They begin with our very being. We are born under the protection and restraint of domestic authority and care. We grow up under the arrangements of public law and rule. What may be defective in these arrangements is made up by the power we attach to the good or bad opinion of those around us in the world. The power of conscience within ourselves is another appointment in favour of virtue and moral government. And the good effects which naturally flow from virtue, and the bad effects which as naturally flow from vice, are a plain argument that the one is the object of the Divine protection and favour, while the other is the object of the Divine displeasure and punishment. These arrangements show that men are not left to



live as they list, but that they are born subject to law and rule—that they are not only the creatures of Divine power, and the objects of Divine goodness, but also the subjects of the Divine government.<sup>1</sup> And the next question which we have to consider is, how far the measures of this government are effectual, how far they answer this end, and how far they are consistent with Divine wisdom and goodness, justice and holiness.

<sup>1</sup> Many of the means of God's moral discipline and government are piously noted by George Herbert, in a sonnet, entitled, 'The Bosom Sin.' It runs thus:—

'Lord ! with what care Thou hast begirt us round !

Parents first season us ; then schoolmasters

Deliver us to laws ; they send us bound

To rules of reason, holy messengers,

Pulpits and Sundays, sorrow dogging sin,

Afflictions sorted, anguish of all sizes,

Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in,

Bibles laid open, millions of surprises,

Blessings beforehand, ties of gratefulness,

The sound of glory ringing in our ears ;

*Without*, our shame, *within*, our consciences ;

Angels and grace, eternal hopes and fears.

Yet all these fences, and their whole array,

One cunning bosom sin blows quite away.'

## CHAPTER V.

THE EXTENT AND EFFICACY AS WELL AS THE WISDOM AND GOODNESS OF GOD'S MORAL GOVERNMENT ARE LIABLE TO BE OVERLOOKED AND UNDERVALUED.

THE measures of moral government, stated in the preceding chapter, are much more extensive and effectual than is commonly thought. They operate in more instances and with more power than is generally believed. The authority of parents and guardians, the counsels and admonitions of friends and relations, are brought to bear, more or less, upon every human being, either in the way of encouragement and protection, or in the way of restraint and punishment. Throughout the whole of civilized society, public law and rule are constantly exerted for the protection of virtue and the punishment of vice. Public opinion and public manners come in aid of the same great ends. And those cases which are not reached by public law, or which are overlooked by public opinion, are taken up by that

law of conscience which every man bears in his bosom ; and he is happy or miserable in his own thoughts according as his conduct has been such as to visit him with the stings of remorse, or to sustain and cheer him in conscious integrity. The natural effects, too, of virtue or vice, altogether independent of the punishments and rewards of society, are extensively and powerfully felt, in securing health, and reputation, and safety, on the one hand, and in producing disease, and infamy, and death, on the other hand. So that, when the constant and unceasing operation of these various measures of moral government are fairly computed, it will be found that the amount of punishment and reward which is administered—that is, the amount of moral government which is carried forward in the world, is very considerable. That this is not more generally seen and acknowledged is to be accounted for by various reasons and causes.

I. *The matter is one which is not much nor correctly thought of.* There is a disinclination, on the part of man, to consider himself as the subject of Divine government. He is more disposed to think of himself as an absolute and independent agent. And when a sense of his ignorance and weakness leads him to think of the Providence which ruleth over all, he is more desirous to regard that Providence as exerted in sustaining and protecting him, than as dispensing to

him good or evil, according to the tenor of his disposition and conduct. And, even when a man sees good or evil coming upon himself or others, directly and immediately, as the consequence of good or bad conduct, there is a tendency to look upon this as a natural or necessary effect, rather than as a judicial and providential arrangement. The Providence of God is looked for in great and extraordinary events, in sudden calamities or accidents, in tempests and whirlwinds, in thunder and lightning, in pestilence and earthquake, in the shock of battle and the fall of empires, rather than in the ordinary arrangements and the daily occurrences of life. But this is a mistake. The Providence of God extends to everything, and may be seen in those events which we call little, better than in those which we call great. Those events, which affect the happiness of whole nations, and influence the destinies of whole quarters of the globe, may strike and startle us more, and may impress us more deeply with the conviction that, verily, there is a God who judgeth in the earth. But there is often a mysterious grandeur about such events, so that we cannot fully comprehend them. In judging and punishing nations and communities, God very often proceeds upon grounds which we do not fully see nor understand. The cup of a country's iniquities may be long in overflowing. One generation may see the commencement of a course of national iniquity, while the punishment which it provokes is witnessed by



another generation. In such cases it requires more knowledge and more reflection than men usually possess to see the justice of the Divine judgments. These cases belong to the outer and higher cycles of Providence, and it is more difficult to understand them than the shorter circles of retribution, which are going round before our eyes, in the ordinary events of life. In these events the hand and Providence of God are more clear. We see the conduct of men, and we see the consequences of that conduct; and when we see that these consequences correspond to that conduct—that wickedness is followed by punishment, infamy, disease, fear, and death—and that virtue is followed by health of body and peace of mind, the respect and esteem of others, and the success and happiness of the virtuous—it is plain that the one is the object of the Divine approbation and favour, and the other of the Divine displeasure and punishment. It should not blind us to the wisdom and justice of these arrangements, that they are carried into effect gradually and silently. It should rather heighten our conceptions of the wisdom of God, that the arrangements of His Providence are so complete and sure, that they accomplish the end in view without difficulty. Yet the very completeness and sureness of these arrangements lead men to speak of the effects or results of them as being *natural consequences*, and thus to detract from the wisdom of Divine Providence. But the truth is, that these con-

sequences are the arrangements of God for the punishment of vice and the protection of virtue; and therefore, when we see men losing their health by intemperance, and their reputation by dishonesty, or securing the peace of their own mind, and attracting the good opinion and the kind offices of others by their integrity and discretion, we see God carrying forward, by human instrumentality and means, the measures of moral discipline and government. That this government is carried forward without any extraordinary or apparent interposition on the part of God, should only make us more sensible of the wisdom and stability of its arrangements. Yet the fact of these arrangements being certain prevents many from considering them as parts of the Providence of God.

It is quite in the way of natural consequence that sinners should, by degrees, grow more careless and daring; for the human mind is so constituted, that whatever is done frequently comes to be done with more ease and with less attention. But this should not prevent us from seeing, and saying that sinners are detected by the Providence of God, when, through that indifference which their long habits of iniquity have induced, they expose themselves to the eye and the punishment of the world; for the arrangement by which this carelessness is generated is the arrangement of God, and it is an arrangement which, while it is fitted to detect and to punish vice, is fitted, at the same time, to strengthen and encourage virtue.

The very same process by which the vicious man grows careless and shameless in his vice, and thus draws down upon himself indignation and punishment, has a tendency to confirm the virtuous man in his virtuous course, and to gather around him the approbation and esteem of others. There is thus a simplicity and unity in the arrangements of Providence, which, while it advances in its wise and righteous career, scatters blessing and reward on the one hand, disgrace and punishment on the other.

Or, to take another illustration of the sure and silent way in which the measures of Divine Providence are carried forward. It is quite according to the constitution of the human mind, that one sin should lead to another. The man who willingly and deliberately gives way to any evil passion, becomes, by the very act, a more easy prey to any other, or to every other evil passion. The resistance, which has been once overcome, will be more easily overcome again; the consent, which has once been given, will be more willingly given a second time. The sinner, indeed, may set out with the resolution of confining himself to some favourite vice. He may say to his deceitful heart, I will offend in this one point, but in all other points I shall try to keep the commandments of God. But it will not do. He will find that the vice to which he surrenders himself will bring others in its train, and that when one evil spirit has got full possession of his bosom, it will sweep it of every

virtuous feeling, and go and bring seven other spirits worse than itself to revel amidst the ruins of his nature. But the object in remarking, that one sin very often leads to another, was to show that one sin is very often made the instrument or means of detecting and punishing another, and in this way the Providence of God is liable to be overlooked. For example, should a sinner, amidst his many sins, be addicted to the particular sin of drunkenness, the probability is, that, in the midst of his intoxication, he may let out the secret of his other sins, which had escaped detection, and thus bring himself to shame and punishment. Now, all this may happen in a way that is quite natural, that is, without any apparent interference on the part of God. But that man must have very little penetration, and less piety, who does not see and acknowledge, in such an occurrence, the work of Providence, in thus employing one sin to detect another, and the truth of the Scripture, which saith, that ‘the tongue of sinners shall fall upon themselves.’—Ps. lxiv. 8.

The slightest hint has often led, in the way of natural consequence, as it is called, to the unravelling of the most complicated mystery of iniquity. And hence, saith the wise man, ‘Curse not the king; no, not in thine heart, for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath no wings shall tell the matter.’ Here, cursing the king, which is one sin, is put for all sin, and the meaning of the passage is, that



no secrecy, no chance of escaping detection, how great soever it may seem, should ever prevail on us to commit sin; for the most unlikely and unexpected circumstances have often contributed to expose and punish the sinner. It should be recollected, however, that these circumstances are arranged and over-ruled by the Providence of God, and, consequently, the detection to which they lead, should be ascribed to Him, although apparently it is brought about by human instrumentality and skill. In other cases, again, where no suspicion on the part of the world was directed towards the sinner, he becomes the instrument of his own detection and punishment. He may be so wrung and tortured by the reproaches of his conscience, that he will himself bring to light the hidden thing that troubles him—he will reveal his guilt, while the punishment of it stares him in the face, he will voluntarily throw himself into the iron arms of justice, and rather than continue to lie on the rack of his own mind, he will lay his head on the block of the executioner. Now, all this may come to pass in a way that is quite natural<sup>1</sup>—quite in accordance with the constitution of the human mind, and the course of human affairs. But it comes to pass, just

<sup>1</sup> ‘The only distinct meaning of the word *natural*,’ says Bishop Butler (*Analogy*, chap. i), ‘is *stated, fixed, or settled*; since what is natural as much requires and presupposes an intelligent agent to render it so, that is, to effect it continually, or at stated times, as what is supernatural or miraculous does to effect it for once.’

because the power of conscience is one of the means which God hath appointed for the detection and punishment of sin, and nothing but our thoughtlessness can prevent us from seeing this. If we could only be brought seriously to consider the constitution and course of human affairs, we should see continual and extensive proofs of the Providence of God. But the very extensiveness and constancy of these proofs lead us to overlook them, and to regard them as natural and necessary effects. And so they are. But they are natural and necessary only by the appointment and operation of Providence. It is quite natural that intemperance should produce disease, and it is necessary that disease should end in death. But why should this prevent us from seeing and acknowledging, that when a man gives way to intemperance, and finds a speedy death, he is punished by the wise and righteous Providence of God? It is quite natural that dishonesty should lead to disgrace and punishment. But the means by which dishonesty is detected, are of Divine arrangement, and the indignation which dishonesty excites, and the vengeance which it deserves, while they are quite in accordance with the natural feelings of the human heart, and the laws of human society, are no less a part of the plan by which God disciplines and governs men. It is quite natural and proper that a kind and humane and beneficent disposition and conduct should call forth the gratitude and esteem of others. But why should this prevent

us from seeing that the gratitude and esteem of our fellow-men are among the rewards which God hath appointed for the encouragement of virtue. When a man's days are prolonged and cheered by temperance and sobriety, or when his reputation rises by his integrity and prudence, we say it is all right and proper, and as it ought to be. But it is so, just because God hath appointed it to be so ; and hath made health and longevity the reward of a sober and frugal life, and respect and esteem the fruit of honourable and upright conduct. And, in short, the more closely we examine the constitution, and course of human affairs, the more clearly will we see the wisdom and justice by which they are governed. But men look with indifference upon what is continually before them, and are more impressed by events which are rare and striking. Hence it is that the Providence of God is looked for, not so much in its ordinary operations, by which it regulates and over-rules the daily affairs of human life, as in those more high and singular movements by which greater and more striking results are produced. The truth is, however, that the more we understand of the ordinary arrangements of Divine Providence, the more easy shall we find it to comprehend its more extraordinary movements. There can be no doubt that it is only by understanding the one that we can rise to proper views of the other. The same great principles of wisdom and justice must regulate both. But the advantage of attending to the ordinary ar-

rangements of Providence is, that the wisdom and justice of these are more apparent and clear. We see both the cause and the effect, the crime and its punishment, the virtue and its reward. But, in the higher and more extraordinary acts of Divine Providence, there is often much mystery mixed up with the judgment. Clouds and darkness are round about it. The means employed to accomplish it are sweeping and overwhelming in their operation; and, amidst the shrieks of the shipwreck, the shouts of the battlefield, the convulsions of the earthquake, and the calamities of famine and pestilence, it may be difficult to understand the design, or to discover the justice of Providence. But, although, after the storm and the fire, we should not be able to catch the meaning of the still small voice which follows, it becomes us, like the prophet of old, to wrap our faces in our mantle, and to stand still, in reverent contemplation of the judgments of God. And we shall certainly be the more likely to do so, with humility and advantage, if we have satisfied ourselves by a careful contemplation of the wisdom and justice which regulate the ordinary arrangements of Providence.

There can be no doubt that the arrangements of Providence extend to communities and countries, as well as to individuals. And there is just as little doubt that the acts of Divine Providence, in reference to communities and countries, must be guided by the same principles of wisdom and goodness, which govern its acts in refer-



ence to individuals. But while those arrangements of Providence, which involve communities and countries, are more striking and calculated to arrest the attention of men, it is more difficult to see the wisdom and the justice of such arrangements ; whereas, in the case of individuals, the sin and its punishment are brought into clear and close connection. The same course of conduct, which is productive of happiness and tranquillity to an individual, will, if followed by a community, in its public conduct, be productive of the same happy effects. But it will be longer before these effects can be seen. And the same conduct, which ruins the peace and the reputation of an individual, will, in the end, be the reproach and ruin of a community. But public virtue and public profligacy are longer in producing their proper effects. The health or the poison has a larger mass to circulate through, but the result is just as certain as in the case of individuals. The history of all nations shows that they have been prosperous and happy, just in proportion as the public faith and the public virtue have been preserved, and that a corruption of manners and dereliction of principles have been uniformly followed by degradation and ruin. Nations, as well as individuals, acquire a character by their public acts. But the national character is of longer growth than the individual, and consequently the treatment of that character, by the arrangements of Providence, is slower in its development. When nations grow luxu-

rious and dissolute, their affairs will not long continue to prosper, and tyranny and injustice are sure to provoke resistance and revenge. But in the case of communities, these results, though sure, are sometimes long in being seen. The dragon teeth may be sown by one generation, and the armed men rise up on their posterity. The foundations of public peace and public prosperity may be weakened in one age, but the temple may not fall in ruins till the next. It is for this reason that great and national judgments do not furnish so clear and so direct an illustration of the justice of Divine Providence, as its more ordinary arrangements do. In the one case, the sin and its punishment are in close connection and contact; in the other, the sin may be committed by one generation, and the punishment may fall most heavily on the next. We are not entitled, therefore, to argue from these extraordinary cases, as to the guilt of all who may be involved in them. Indeed, we are expressly warned, by the highest authority, not to do so. 'Those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay.' They may have been sinners, and sinners in such a way as to vindicate the Providence of God in the punishment which came upon them. But we are not good judges in such cases. They do not belong to the ordinary arrangements of Providence; at least, it would require us to have a higher and a fuller know-

ledge of its ways to understand them. Just in proportion as the duration of states and empires is longer than the life of man, may the acts of Providence be slower in reference to communities than in reference to individuals. And, unless we know all the previous circumstances which contribute to draw down great and national judgments, we may not be able to see the justice or the propriety of them. There was a famine in the days of David, three years, year after year. And when David inquired of the Lord the reasons of this grievous calamity, he was answered, 'It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.' Now, Saul was long since dead; and it does not, at first sight, appear how, in the Providence of God, famine should have followed and continued because Saul was bloody-minded, and because he had slain the Gibeonites. Upon reflection, however, it may occur that Saul was a turbulent and warlike prince, burning to display his personal bravery and prowess, and to advance the dominion and glory of the kingdom of Israel. He kept his people in a state of constant readiness for war, or in a series of warlike movements, against the neighbouring nations. In these circumstances, it is easy to see that the arts of agriculture and peace would be neglected, and that the people, accustomed to a life of rapine and plunder, might forbear to cultivate their fields, and thus contribute to draw down the punishment of famine upon their injustice. The slaying of the

Gibeonites—a people who had taken refuge on the borders of Israel, and were content to dwell there—was an act of cruelty and injustice which could not fail to shake the confidence of the Israelites in the security of their laws and government, and lead them to neglect the cultivation of their lands, when they were doubtful of being permitted to reap the harvest ; and in this way the evils of famine might be continued and increased. But while a connection, quite in accordance with the principles upon which God governs men in this world, may thus be traced between the famine and the cruelty and injustice which provoked it, it is not in every case of this kind that we can do so. And even when we can do so, the length of time which elapses between the sin and its punishment, prevents us from seeing the justice of God so clearly in these cases as in the ordinary arrangements of His Providence. The iniquities of a nation pierce the skies ; but the lightning does not instantly descend. And, in tracing the cause of some national calamity and judgment, we may have to follow many links of a heavily charged chain of national iniquity, before we come to the one which elicited the fatally electric spark of the Divine judgment. We read in Scripture (Gen. xv. and xvi.) that in the time of Abraham, the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full ; and it was not till four generations after Abraham that they were exposed to the visitations of Divine Providence. And in the present day, there are some who think they see, in the



degraded condition of Spain, the punishment of the cruelty and injustice which that country displayed towards the inhabitants of the New World, centuries ago. Fired with the prospect of extended dominion, and the lust of foreign gold, they forgot those ties which bind together the great brotherhood of men, and prosecuted their conquest with restless and unsparing cruelty. Pride, indolence, and luxury followed their ill-gotten wealth. The cultivation of the higher and more ennobling pursuits was neglected; and while the other nations of Europe were entering, in generous emulation, on that career of intellectual energy and freedom, which the principles of the Reformation opened up to them, Spain continued sunk in the darkest superstition and ignorance. They were so dazzled by the glare of the gold and jewels which their rapacious injustice had accumulated, that for them the mild but powerful light of truth and liberty had neither charm nor virtue. The moral darkness has not yet been dispelled—the intellectual lethargy has never been disturbed. A race, formed in nature's finest mould, are still bound in the fetters of despotism and superstition—a country, rich in all the bounties of Providence, has been a theatre of successive and bloody wars. Internal discord and foreign invasion have kept them in a state of terror and barbarism. They have known no light but the gleam of clashing arms, and have heard nothing of liberty but in the shouts and war-cries of contending parties.

The wrongs which their rapacity and injustice inflicted upon others have returned upon themselves, and Spain has suffered a long and heavy retribution. One of our poets has unfolded the principles and procedure of the Divine government, in reference to their case, in language so clear and powerful, that the quotation of it may be pardoned :—

‘ The hand that slew till it could slay no more,  
Was glued to the sword-hilt with Indian gore.  
Their prince, as justly seated on his throne  
As vain imperial Philip on his own,  
Tricked out of all his royalty by art,  
That stripped him bare, and broke his honest heart,  
Died by the sentence of a shaven priest,  
For scorning what they taught him to detest.  
How dark the veil that interrupts the blaze  
Of Heaven’s mysterious purposes and ways ;  
God stood not, though He seemed to stand aloof ;  
And, at this hour, the conqueror feels the proof :  
The wreath he won drew down an instant curse,  
The fretting plague is in the public purse,  
The cankered spoil corrodes the pining state,  
Starved by that indolence their minds create.

O ! could their ancient Incas rise again,  
How would they take up Israel’s taunting strain !  
Art thou, too, fallen, Iberia ? Do we see  
The robber and the murderer, weak as we ?  
Thou that hast wasted earth, and dared despise  
Alike the wrath and mercy of the skies ;  
Thy pomp is in the grave, thy glory laid  
Low in the pits thine avarice has made.  
We come with joy from our eternal rest,  
To see the oppressor in his turn oppressed.

Art thou the god, the thunder of whose hand  
Rolled over all our desolated land,  
Shook principalities and kingdoms down,  
And made the mountains tremble at his frown?  
The sword shall light upon thy boasted powers,  
And waste them, as the sword has wasted ours.  
'Tis thus Omnipotence His law fulfils,  
And vengeance executes what Justice wills.'

COWPER'S *Poems*—*Charity*.

Another of our poets has not hesitated to hint his fears that a similar fate may await ourselves, and that the wealth and luxury which our conquests and our commerce have poured in upon us, may so cover and corrupt the land, as to make it a fit subject of the Divine judgments :—

'The time may come when, stript of all her charms,  
This land of scholars, and this nurse of arms,  
Where noble stems transmit the patriot claim,  
And monarchs toil, and poets pant, for fame,  
One sink of level avarice shall lie,  
And scholars, soldiers, kings, unhonoured die.'

To some, indeed, it has seemed by no means improbable, that, as Spain is, at this moment, suffering from the consequences of her rapacity and injustice, in conquering and pillaging the West Indies and Mexico, so this country may yet be made to feel the punishment of that cruel indifference with which she long regarded the interests of her Indian Empire. If it should prove so, it would merely be adding another to the many illustrations which we have of the

righteous Providence of God, in punishing the faults of nations and communities, as well as of individuals. India was too long regarded by us chiefly as a field for the struggles of ambition and avarice; and the crowds of our countrymen who pressed to that land of silk and jewels, were urged chiefly by the desire of becoming great and rich. In the prosecution of their self-aggrandising schemes, the rights and interests of the natives, if not altogether neglected, were too much overlooked. Hear the humiliating language in which one of our philosophic statesmen denounced our government of India:—‘England has erected no churches, no hospitals, no palaces, no schools. England has built no bridges, made no high-roads, cut no navigations, dug out no reservoirs. Every other conqueror, of every other description, has left some monument, either of state or beneficence, behind him.’ ‘Were we,’ said Burke, ‘to be driven out of India this day, nothing would remain to tell that it had been possessed, during the inglorious period of our dominion, by anything better than the Ourang-outang or the Tiger.’ Such *was* the language which could be held by the last generation. But another and a better spirit has begun to breathe throughout the hearts and the councils of our country. We have been roused to a sense of our awful responsibility in reference to India. We have come to feel the great moral truth, ‘that he who voluntarily continues ignorant is guilty of all the crimes which ignorance



produces ; as to him that should extinguish the tapers of a lighthouse, might justly be imputed the calamities of shipwreck.' The tide, which once left the shores of India, bringing wealth and glory to this country, but carrying nothing back—unless it were the groans of disappointed ambition, or the wailings of avarice that is always poor—now returns, in kindly speed, laden with the improvements of European art and the treasures of European knowledge. Let us hope that the efforts which are now making for the civilization and improvement of India, may be sufficient to arrest the judgments which our former carelessness was calculated to provoke. These efforts are in themselves so noble, and have hitherto been so promising, that we are almost tempted to indulge the hope, that God, instead of punishing us, by His Providence, for our former negligence, designs to make us the instruments of spreading more extensively the knowledge of His true and undefiled religion. And, most assuredly, if the plans which have been in progress for the civilization of India should be continued and prove successful ; if, by means of these, the natives of India should be brought to the knowledge and belief of the truth ; if their minds, instead of being dwarfed by the fooleries of an absurd mythology, should be swelled and strengthened by a sound and wholesome education ; if their lives, instead of being sickened and polluted by the crimes of a licentious worship, should be purified by the precepts

of true morality, and prolonged by the wisdom which carries in her right hand length of days ; if their different castes, instead of regarding each other with contempt or envy, should be brought to see themselves the offspring of one common Father, and to love one another with a pure heart fervently ; if their children, instead of being barbarously devoted to a premature death, should be looked on as a heritage from the Lord, and brought up in His fear ; if their widows, instead of casting themselves upon the funeral pile of their husbands, should be taught to trust in God, who, from His holy habitation, is a Father to the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows ; if their affections, instead of creeping along the dust of the earth, and adhering to stocks and stones, and the perishing things of the world, should be trained up on high to clasp, with their finest tendrils, the glorious promises of eternity ; if their hopes, instead of being fixed on the transmigrations and avatars of their fabulous divinities, should be directed into the patient waiting for Christ ; if their death, instead of being darkened by the terrors of guilt, should come to be gladdened by the hope that is full of immortality ; if their souls, instead of returning to their God, soiled and cankered by the degrading effects of a corrupting superstition, should appear before Him clothed in robes of righteousness ;—if these should be the happy, as they are the desired, results of the plans which have been in progress, then may it be

said, that India has been conquered for her good. She may have suffered much, in the feverish and convulsive struggles with which she resisted the power that overcame her ; but her tears and blood may yet be forgotten in the life and gladness which Christianity shall diffuse over her sun-burnt plains. And although the spoils with which she has enriched the British Empire, and the jewels with which she has adorned the British crown, had been a thousand times more precious and brilliant, they must fade into utter insignificance, before the unsearchable riches of Christ, and the spiritual glories of His heavenly kingdom.

But whether we may thus be honoured as the instruments of conferring incalculable good upon India, or whether we may be called to suffer the heavy penalty of our negligence and misgovernment—as the alarming events now taking place in that country may give ground to fear—in either issue, we may have reason to admire and to adore the depths of that judgment and mercy which God, by His Providence, is silently but continually exercising in the earth.

But, as has been already said, while the great principles of the Divine government may be discovered in the history of nations, as well as in the life of individuals, it is much more difficult to trace the working of these principles in the one case than in the other. When nations and communities are visited by the

judgments of God, these judgments may have been deserved by a series of national and public acts, which it may be difficult to detect, and these judgments may have been delayed by causes which it may be as difficult to determine. But, in the case of individuals, the matter is more fully and clearly before us, and we can see and acknowledge, more firmly, the wisdom and justice of the Divine administration. The ordinary events of Providence are the best means of judging of its measures. But men are apt to overlook these, and to wait for more striking acts of the Divine administration; and, because these acts are not so frequent, the Providence of God is thought to be much more limited in its operation than it really is. To all, however, who carefully consider the condition of man, the constitution of the human mind, the frame-work of civil society, and the ordinary occurrences of human life, and who see how frequently and how surely vice is followed by disease, and shame, and death, and how uniformly virtue issues in health of body and peace of mind, in securing the kindly feelings and the good offices of others, and in leading to happiness and comfort,—to all such, it will appear, that the Providence of God is not only wise and righteous in its arrangements, but that these arrangements are extensive and efficient, and operate much more widely and powerfully than is usually imagined.

## II. Another cause of the mistake as to the extent



and efficacy of the measures of Divine Providence is, that, *From the very nature of these measures, they are not easily traced and observed.*

We have been adverting to the mistake, by which men, in general, are led to look for the Providence of God in great and remarkable occurrences, rather than in the ordinary events of human life. But even when this mistake has been corrected, and when we come carefully to consider these events, it is difficult to trace the full operation of Providence in reference to them. When a wicked man proceeds so far in his wickedness as to provoke the indignation and contempt of all around him, or to draw down upon himself infamy and death, we see the righteousness and wisdom of those arrangements, by which he is punished. Or, when a good man walks on in his integrity, and is followed by the respect, and esteem, and gratitude of all who are benefited by his kindness or his example, we see clearly that, even in this life, there is a reward for the righteous. But there is much of moral suffering and moral enjoyment, of which the world can never know. In acting as a moral agent, the matter lies chiefly between a man and his God; and the reward or the punishment of his conduct is very often not known to others. For the benefit of society, there are some sins upon which heavy and public punishment is appointed to fall; because, if they were not so punished, human society could not exist. And there are some virtuous dispositions and actions which men have

unanimously agreed to applaud and promote, because they are the cement and the solace of social life. But much of the good and evil of human conduct can be known only to the agents themselves. The world has no knowledge of it, and no public cognizance can be taken of it, either in the way of reward or of punishment. Such, however, are the arrangements of Providence, that, in these cases, reward and punishment are most righteously and effectively dispensed. So long as a wicked man escapes the suspicion or punishment of the law, he is presumed to be innocent. But how much may he not be suffering all the while! Now, in so far as law is founded on those ideas of right and wrong which are natural to man, it may be said to be one of the arrangements of Providence for the punishment of sin, as well as conscience. The punishment which law inflicts is known, but the punishment which conscience inflicts is not necessarily known. Indeed, the punishment which conscience inflicts is often studiously concealed. The sunken eye and sallow cheek of the sinner may indicate the burning of that unblown fire, by which his health and spirits are consumed. But he often affects an unnatural levity, and tries to smile while the ache is at his heart. In this way, the sinner may seem, to the careless and inconsiderate, to have escaped from the punishment of his sin, whereas, if he himself durst tell the story of his own thoughts, it would be full of horror and retribution. And, without adverting to

those cases in which conscience has been deeply wounded and inflicts deadly punishment, how often may the utterance of a hasty word, the rejection of some proffered kindness, or the thoughtless offending of the feelings of others, make us miserable ! The misery which we thus bring upon ourselves, by a neglect of any of the little claims or courtesies of social life, is a kind of misery from which we do not seek for relief, by proclaiming it to others, any more than the misery which springs from the consciousness of having committed some great crime. But the one is as much in accordance with the principles of the Divine government as the other ; and both are the appointments of Providence. So that, whether we look to the greater or to the smaller acts of men, as moral agents, it will be seen that these acts may be visited by the arrangements of Providence, to an amount of suffering very severe, without that visitation or suffering being known. The man who has been guilty of some great crime, does not speak of the horror and punishment which the consciousness of that crime inflicts, lest, by doing so, he should expose himself to further shame and punishment ; and it is not till the reproaches of his conscience become altogether intolerable, and lead him to seek the termination or the change of his sufferings, that he frantically reveals their cause. In like manner, the man who has hurt the feelings or injured the reputation of others, by his unguarded language or thoughtless

behaviour, is so ashamed and humbled by the sense of his impropriety of conduct, that he submits in bitterness to the humiliation in his own eyes, without exposing himself to humiliation in the sight of others.

So that, in both classes of actions, both in actions which are greatly criminal, and in actions which are not so grievously sinful, Providence may, by the instrumentality of conscience, be carrying forward a large amount of moral retribution, of which the world can never know. They who suffer in this way, seek to conceal, rather than declare, their misery; and thus, by those who do not think seriously of the matter, the operations of Providence are thought to be much less extensive and powerful in punishing sin than they really are. When some great criminal has been detected, and is about to be punished, the axe, which is lifted to fall on his devoted head, gleams in the sight of the assembled multitude; and the pomp and circumstance of public justice point out the case to wide and general notice. But among the multitude who applaud the righteousness of the sentence, there may be some who have suffered sharper wounds than iron can give. And, in comparison of the few who are brought to open shame and punishment, there are many who sink under the weight of silent sorrow, or, like stricken deer, retire to their retreat and die; while those whose conduct has not been so criminal, and whose conscience does not reproach them so severely, undergo an amount of punishment which may not be



observed, but which is far from being light. So that, when the matter is properly considered, it will be found, that the measures of Providence in detecting and punishing great and heinous crimes, or in visiting lesser misconduct with uneasiness and remorse, are far more extensive and efficient than would at first sight appear.

A similar remark may be made with regard to the arrangements by which good and virtuous conduct is rewarded in this life; for these arrangements, both in their operation and in their results, are very liable to be overlooked. The peaceful satisfaction of mind, which springs from the consciousness of good conduct, and which is one of its highest rewards, is a calm and silent enjoyment, and not likely to attract much observation or notice. It may be seen, no doubt, in the mild lustre of the clear and happy eye, and diffusing itself over the whole demeanour and bearing of the virtuous man. But the world, in general, look for more glaring and gaudy shows, and, except to his more immediate friends and neighbours, the amount of happiness enjoyed by the virtuous man is altogether unknown; and even they can only enter into it, in so far as they are virtuous and happy themselves. It is the same with regard to the other benefits which Providence may bestow upon a good man in this life. His temperance and caution may secure to him the benefit of sound and vigorous health. But this is very often overlooked, and ascribed to the gift of a

constitution originally good. His industry and activity may insure to him, by the wise and righteous appointment of Providence, success in his profession or business. But this is perversely attributed to what is called good fortune. His mild and amiable manners may render him the object of affection and esteem to all around him, and this may be regarded as the effect of his being good-natured and harmless. And while there is thus an averseness, on the part of men in general, to acknowledge the hand of Providence, in protecting and prospering the virtuous, the virtuous bear the advantages to which they have attained so meekly, that they are apt to be overlooked, or to be overshadowed by the greater glare and show of the wicked. The wicked are ready to make a boast of any advantages to which they may attain. They are always soliciting public observation and applause. As, in law, things that appear not, and things that are not, are accounted the same, so it may be said, in reference to the advantages which wicked men enjoy, that they might as well not be, as not appear; for the only enjoyment, which they seem to have of their advantages, seems to be, in provoking the envy or admiration of others. So long as they are in prosperity, they live by proclamation and procession. One, like Jehu, takes his chariot and drives furiously, to excite the terror and the gaze of the multitude; and, lest that should fail, he cries, at every corner of his vain career, ‘Come, see my riches and my glory.’ An-

other, who scarcely needs a decree to turn him out among the beasts of the field, walks, like Nebuchadnezzar, in his open palace and public garden, and says, in utter emptiness, 'Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by the might of my power, and for the glory of my majesty?' A third, like Herod, will come out upon a set day, arrayed in gorgeous apparel, and making an oration to the people, will think his happiness advanced by their idle and blasphemous shoutings. Thus, by the ostentatious display of any supposed advantages which they happen to possess, the wicked try to impress the world with the belief of their happiness and prosperity, and divert the attention of the careless and inconsiderate from the less attractive, but far higher rewards of integrity and virtue. A good man knows the value of a good conscience, and the emptiness of popular applause; and, while he holds fast by the one, he seeks not the other. He would rather avoid it, and, in the language of the poet,—

'Do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame.'

When he giveth alms, his right hand knoweth not what his left hand doeth; and his charity, instead of breaking out in capricious and destructive torrents, like the miscalled and misjudging liberality of the wicked, is silent, and regular, and refreshing, as the dews of heaven. When he fasts, he disfigures not his face. When he prays, he enters into his closet, and shuts the door. In short, the whole life of a good

man is said, in Scripture, to be hid with God ; and, because he flees from its temptations and its applauses, he is set down, by the misjudging world, as melancholy and unfortunate, while he is quietly and temperately enjoying the health, the riches, and cheerfulness, which are the rewards of his temperance, his integrity, and his godliness.

It would thus appear that, whether we advert to the arrangements of Providence, by which vice is punished or virtue rewarded in this life, these arrangements are very liable to be overlooked. A bad man does not tell what he suffers for his wickedness, by the stings of conscience, the loss of friends, the blasting of his reputation, and defeating of his prospects in life. A good man, on the other hand, makes no boast of the peace and satisfaction, the respect and esteem, the health, and comfort, and success, which he finds to be the fruit of virtue. So that the wisdom and the justice of Providence, in punishing the one and in rewarding the other, are but little thought of. What tends still more to misapprehension upon this subject is, that the wicked are always loud and ostentatious in reference to any advantages which they happen to possess, while the righteous are quiet and retired in their happiness. The one is thus overborne by the clamour, and overshadowed by the display of the other, and the conclusion come to by the great mass of men is, that the distributions of Providence are much less extensive, and much less accurate than they really are. It



requires more time and reflection than men in general are willing to give to it, to detect the hollowness of those appearances which vice frequently assumes, and to discover the full amount of the penalties which it really suffers. And, as the heart of the sinner can only know its own bitterness, so the joy of the virtuous is a joy with which a stranger cannot intermeddle. And the result of a careful consideration of the subject will be, to show that the measures of Divine Providence, both for the detection and the punishment of vice, and for the encouragement and reward of virtue in this life, are much more extensive, and much more effectual, than they are usually supposed to be.

By the very constitution of our nature, every virtuous disposition and pursuit is naturally productive of tranquillity and pleasure ; and every vicious passion, and every criminal indulgence, naturally tends to punish us with vexation and pain. That turn of mind which displays itself in acts of piety and benevolence, makes us at once happy in ourselves and amiable to others. On the contrary, all those dispositions and habits which reason and conscience condemn are naturally productive of mischief and misery. Pride, malice, envy, and revenge, fill the heart which they inhabit with continual disquiet. The sober and temperate generally enjoy the best health. The frugal and industrious usually obtain the greatest wealth. The peaceable and inoffensive are always

the most respected and beloved. On the other hand, disease and pain follow intemperance and dissipation. Hatred and contempt are the portion of the envious and revengeful; and, by idleness and prodigality, a man is clothed with rags, and brought to a piece of bread. In short, evil pursues sinners, and men cannot wander from the path of virtue without wandering from their true happiness and their best interest. This is a truth which we ought ever to hold fast, and to be upon our guard against the delusive appearances, and hollow reasonings, which would urge us to let it go.<sup>1</sup> It may be easy to fix upon a few examples of splendid and successful vice, and a few more of depressed and suffering virtue, and, by a little contrast and colouring, to draw from them an apparent argument against the justice of Providence. But, if we look closely, even to the best selected cases, we shall find, that the difficulty which they present is much less formidable than it is usually imagined to be. The truth is, that, in as far as the happiness of the individuals is concerned, conscience has the power of making everything equal and right. External circumstances may contribute, but they cannot, of themselves, make men

<sup>1</sup> "Individual cases of long life in wickedness are observed, and fastened on, and exaggerated by the vicious, to prove to themselves that their course is not a shorter road to the grave; and yet it is a law—a law of God, in constant operation, that every violation of moral law saps, so far, the foundation of natural life."—ARNOT, *On Proverbs*, p. 140.

either happy or miserable. The mind is the source and seat of all true happiness, and of all real misery. And, when it is considered that, in the midst of their greatest prosperity, the wicked may be assailed by the stings of remorse and the fear of future shame and punishment, while the righteous are supported under every calamity which can befall them, by the testimony of a good conscience and the hope of better things, the state of the case is very much altered, and we may be disposed to acquiesce in the declaration of Scripture, that the little which the righteous have is better than the riches of many wicked ; since with all their privations, the one class may experience more joy and gladness than the other can have, even when their corn and wine do most abound. Indeed, it is a singular fact, that the persons most ready to cry out against the justice of Providence are the wicked who are prospering, rather than the virtuous, who are supposed to be suffering. The truth is, that many of those things which are regarded by the world as calamities, are not felt as such by the virtuous. ‘Are good people,’ says an excellent writer (Salvianus, *De Providentia*, Oxon, 1629, p. 8), ‘in a low condition ? they desire to be so. Are they poor ? they are pleased with poverty. They refuse the objects of ambition, and hunt not after great things. Are they without honour ? they refuse the honour of the world. Do they mourn ? there is joy even in this mourning. Are they weak ? they can triumph over their weak-

ness.' It may be said, indeed, that it is the part of a wise and good man to bring his mind to his condition, and not to fret or complain of a state of matters which he cannot help, but that his wisdom in submitting to hardships does not vindicate the justice or goodness of Providence, in exposing him to them. There is a suitableness between the capacities of our nature and the objects around us. The advantages of the world may contribute much towards human happiness, and the want of these advantages may occasion suffering and misery. The question, therefore still recurs, Why are these advantages not distributed more strictly in reference to the character and conduct of men? Why are the righteous so frequently deprived of these advantages, and the wicked permitted to enjoy them?



## CHAPTER VI.

## THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED AND THE ADVERSITY OF THE RIGHTEOUS COMPATIBLE WITH MORAL GOVERNMENT.

It has been attempted to show, that the principles and arrangements of the Divine Government, in so far as we can understand and trace them, are decidedly favourable to virtue, and unfavourable to vice. And the result of these arrangements and the operation of these principles, when carefully examined, will show that, in point of fact, the righteous enjoy more happiness in this life than the wicked do. But the question is pressed more closely, and it is asked, Why are the wicked permitted to prosper? and Why are the righteous exposed to suffering in this life? The question is, not as to the amount of personal happiness enjoyed by the righteous or the wicked, but Why are the means of happiness sometimes withheld from the one and dispensed to the other? Why is there prosperity to the wicked and adversity to the righteous? The answer to this diffi-

culty is, That the wicked, when they do prosper in the world, do not prosper in *consequence* of their wickedness ; and that, when the righteous suffer hardship, it is not in *consequence* of their righteousness. The prosperity of the wicked and the adversity of the righteous do not flow from the great and leading principles of the Divine Government, although they are incidental to the working of them. The plan of Providence is, to protect the good and punish the bad ; but, in carrying out that plan, the wicked are sometimes permitted to prosper, and the righteous are occasionally exposed to hardship. And our object now is to show, that this arises not from any deviation of the Divine purpose, or any dereliction of the principles of the Divine Government, but that it arises from the circumstances under which that government is conducted, and that, when the wicked do prosper in the world, their prosperity is not to be viewed as the *reward* of their wickedness ; and that, when the righteous are in adversity, that adversity is not the *punishment* of their righteousness. These things may be connected, but they are not judicially connected. Prosperity and wickedness may meet in the same individual ; but they do not concur as cause and effect. A man may be poor *although* he be righteous, but he is not poor *because* he is righteous. In short, the connection between prosperity and vice, and between adversity and virtue, is a *casual* rather than a *causal* connection. The general law and the ordinary result

is, that virtue conduces to a man's advantage in this life, and that vice is contrary to it ; and, when the exceptions from this law and the result are carefully examined, they will be found to confirm rather than impeach the wisdom and justice of the Divine rule and government.

Before proceeding to this part of the subject, it may be proper to observe, That these exceptions are by no means so numerous as they have often been thought and represented to be. Various causes have contributed to misapprehension on this subject. On the one hand, Infidels have always been ready to expatiate upon the dulness and infelicity of a life of self-denial and virtue, and to point with exultation to the happiness and prosperity of those who walk in the way of their own eyes, and follow the devices of their own imaginations. Good men, of a melancholy constitution, have frequently indulged in the most gloomy views of the Divine Government, and, under the pressure of adversity, have been led to charge God foolishly. When fleeing before Ahab, Elijah fancied that he alone was persecuted and righteous ; but he was told, that God had still his thousands in Israel who had never bowed the knee to Baal. David said, in his haste, that all men were liars ; and the prophet Jeremiah exclaimed, Wherefore are all they happy who deal very treacherously ? But, in such instances, there is evidently a good deal of peevishness and mistake ; for, although there be falsehood and deceit

in the world, truth and integrity have not altogether fled from it; and, although examples may be found of those who deal treacherously being prosperous, these examples are exceptions from the ordinary and general rule, which is, to award respect and success in life to those who are upright and honourable in their dealings. Now, when good and holy men are thus liable to be carried away, under the influence of distressing circumstances and excited feelings, into wrong and injurious views of the Providence of God, it is not wonderful that similar views should be entertained or countenanced by others. The truth is, that we are very liable to commit mistakes, when we presume to determine who are the righteous and who are the wicked in this world. The true characters of men are known only to God who searcheth the heart. As in judging of ourselves, we are liable to be partial, so in judging of others, we may err through ignorance or prejudice. Indeed, men are very ready to limit the character of virtuous to those who agree with them in sentiment, and to exaggerate into crimes the failings of those who differ from them. It is well for us all that we live under the government of a Being who is equally above the darkness of our condition and the infirmity of our nature. Did God commit the distributions of His Providence to the agency of man, the inequality complained of would be greatly aggravated. There would be favouritism among the elements, and the stars would take a side. The sun would rise and



the rain fall only within the precincts of a party, while all beyond would be consigned to darkness and sterility; and, in a mistaken and indiscreet zeal to check or destroy the tares, the good seed would also be rooted up. The tendency of party views and party feelings to limit the number of the righteous to those who agree with us in sentiment, leads to an exaggerated estimate of the number and prosperity of the wicked, and to an exaggerated view of the inequality of the distributions of Divine Providence, because any one who enjoys prosperity without, in our opinion, deserving it, is set down as an example of this inequality; whereas, if we knew fully and fairly the whole character of those who were prosperous in the world, we should see that, in many cases, they truly deserve to be so, according to all the principles and procedure of right and moral government. In short, a less narrow and partial view of the characters of men, would show us, that many of those cases which are held up as proofs of the inequality and injustice of the distributions of Providence, are not really so.

Another cause of misapprehension upon this subject is to be found in the connection which it has with the great doctrine of a future existence. In establishing this doctrine, it is usual to draw an argument from the unequal and inadequate distributions of Providence in this life; and it is contended that, as the good and the bad are not in this life treated exactly

according to their respective characters, the good being often in adversity, and the bad in prosperity, there must be another life, in which this inequality can be set right, and the moral government of God vindicated from the charge of injustice. Now, this is a good argument. But, in stating the argument, some have gone so far as to represent this life as a scene of utter confusion and disorder, where the wicked carry off all the advantages, and where the righteous have little or nothing but adversities to endure, and the hope of better things to console them. This, however is wrong in point of fact, and it is wrong in point of argument. If there were no distinction made by the Providence of God between the characters of men, if all things came alike to all, if health were the fruit of excess as well as of temperance, if riches followed extravagance as well as industry, if reputation were the reward of injustice as well as of integrity, or even if it could be shown, that in this life the advantage is in favour of vice rather than in favour of virtue, I do not see how there could be any argument from the distributions of this life in favour of a future life. But the argument runs thus—that, in the present life, the advantage is manifestly in favour of virtue, not in every case, but upon the whole; and, seeing from the distributions of His Providence, that God means to make a distinction between the characters of men, and that the distinction is not fully made here, it

follows that it will be made hereafter. In short, the evidences of moral government, begun and carrying on before us, coupled with the obvious incompleteness of the measures of that government, lead us to expect that these measures will be continued and carried out in another state. But it is doing injustice to this argument to narrow or to destroy the grounds upon which it rests. These grounds are the evidences which this life affords of a distinction being made between the righteous and the wicked, and the incompleteness of that distinction. But to make that incompleteness greater than it really is, does not strengthen but rather weakens the argument. Indeed, no cause can ever be benefited by exaggeration. Truth is the only thing that can or that ought to prevail. The plan of God's government must be true to itself, and all its parts consistent with one another; and the shortest and the surest way to secure the belief of others in the measures of that government is to state them as they are actually carried on. We must not plead deceitfully, even for God; and the cause of truth needs no eloquence but its own. Many, however, in arguing for the doctrine of a future existence, from the defects and irregularities of the present, have represented this life as a scene of unquelled injustice and confusion, where vice is prosperous and triumphant, and virtue poor and oppressed. Some allowance, indeed, may be made for expressions of this kind, when they are extorted from those who

are themselves suffering adversity, and who cry out, in the bitterness of their heart, like the Psalmist of old, 'Lo! these are the ungodly who prosper in the world.' But when the prosperity of the wicked is exaggerated in a grave and moral argument, it leads to erroneous views of the Providence of God; and when the measures of that Providence are represented as indifferent to the righteous, or rather as favourable to the wicked, this is taking the exception for the rule. The rule is, that the virtuous are happy and the wicked miserable even in this life; and the exceptions are by no means so numerous or so striking as the misapprehensions and exaggerations upon the subject, would lead us to suppose.

Granting, however, that there are exceptions—that the wicked do sometimes prosper, and the righteous suffer adversity, in this life—it remains to show how these occurrences can be reconciled with the wisdom and goodness of the Divine government. The justice of the Divine government cannot be said, strictly speaking, to be involved in these occurrences. For, as has already been remarked, when the wicked prosper in the world, their prosperity is not the reward of their wickedness; and, when the righteous suffer adversity, that adversity is not sent as a punishment for their righteousness. When a man, given to intemperance and folly, continues to enjoy good health, every one sees that this is not in *consequence*, but in *spite*, of his intemperance. And, when a man of re-



gular and temperate habits, is visited with sickness, no one looks upon this sickness as the fruit of his regularity and temperance. These things are not cause and effect. They are not to be viewed as reward and punishment. And the Providence of God is not concerned in them, further than that the individuals to whom they happen are under its government. But, it is not the law of that government to connect health with intemperance, nor sickness with sobriety. This answer is good to a certain extent. It is good, in so far as it goes to show that, in many cases, when the wicked prosper in the world, they prosper not in *consequence*, but in *spite*, of their wickedness; and that, when the righteous suffer adversity, that adversity is not the fruit or punishment of their righteousness. At the same time, it must be admitted, that there are instances in which, it would appear, that the advantages to which the wicked attain in this life, are attained by their wickedness; and that many of the hardships to which the righteous are exposed, come upon them just in consequence of their character and conduct as righteous men. This is a view of the subject which has often attracted the notice, and perplexed the thoughts, of those who have been anxious to understand and to vindicate the ways of Providence. It is noticed by the wise man as one of the things which he had seen in the days of his vanity (Eccles. vii. 15); that there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that longeth life in

his wickedness. It is not the simple fact of a just man perishing, and a wicked man prolonging his life, which occasioned difficulty to Solomon; but the fact of the one perishing *in*, or *through*, or on *account* of, his righteousness; and the other prolonging his life *in*, or by *means* of, his wickedness. But, if we take even this case,<sup>1</sup> and, instead of confining the words in which it is put to the single circumstance of a long or a short existence, extend them to everything which we are accustomed to call prosperous or adverse, we shall find that it is a case which can be explained without impeaching the wisdom or justice of the Divine government. With this view, it may be observed,—

I. *That in many instances in which just and righteous men perish, or are brought into difficulty, this can be traced not so much to their righteousness, as to the imperfection of their righteousness.*

‘The virtues,’ said the ancient Stoics, ‘are many, but they are undivided;’ not a link can be missing, but the whole chain is broken and dissolved. In like manner, the perfect man, whom it is the object of religion to form, is a man in whom all the virtues and graces of the human character and the human condi-

<sup>1</sup> If a good man suffered in this life, *because* he was a good man, or if a wicked man prospered, *because* he was a wicked man, there would be ground of complaint against the Providence of God. But this is never the case.—*Les Soirées de St Petersburg, Première Entretien.*—Par M. le COMTE de MAISTRE.

tion should meet and unite. It is needless to remark, however, that the point to which philosophy and true religion teach us to aspire, is a point to which few or none can be said to reach ; and that, when we speak of a just or virtuous man, we speak not of one in whom all the virtues are united, but only of one in whom the virtues are predominant ; for, although the Scripture had not said it, our own observation and experience are sufficient to satisfy us, that there is not a just man upon earth who doeth good and sinneth not. But, although the pure eye of God may discern defects in the characters of the best of men, although, when He looks to the lofty acquirements of His law, and the imperfect obedience of His creatures, there may be none whom He can judicially pronounce just, yet this term is frequently employed, in a qualified sense, to signify those who sincerely desire and steadily follow after righteousness, and who, although not just or righteous,<sup>1</sup> in the strict and proper sense of the word, are yet called or reckoned so. In like manner, although the theory of philosophy has never been realized, the theory, viz., that the virtues are all linked together, and that he, who practises one class of virtues, is likely to attain to all the rest, yet still philosophers have agreed to call virtuous, the man who, although his character is not yet adorned with all the

<sup>1</sup> The strictly theological use of the term righteous is, to denote those who are justified in the sight of God, by faith in the righteousness of Christ.

virtues, is steadily pursuing them, and gradually acquiring them. It would thus appear, that both in Scripture and in common language, the terms just, and righteous, and virtuous, are used, in a qualified sense, not as denoting those who have attained to perfection in the practice of religion, or the precepts of philosophy, but those who are steadily aiming at it. Of many, however, to whom these terms are so applied, the characters are very imperfect; it is through this very imperfection of their characters, that they are exposed to difficulty; and yet, because upon the whole, they are virtuous and just persons, the difficulty to which they are exposed, is ascribed to their righteousness, when it would be more correct to ascribe it to the imperfection of their righteousness. Whether, if men could, in this life, attain to perfect personal righteousness, they would, by the perfection of their righteousness, escape from all the evils and calamities to which they are now exposed, is a point upon which, at present, it is not necessary to pronounce. Unless all men were to attain to perfect righteousness, this world could not be exempted from the discipline to which it is now subject. Sin and suffering are inseparably connected in the government of God; and, although one part of men were to be free from sin, yet still, so long as they lived in a world where sin to any extent reigned, they would be exposed to suffer, through the administration of the discipline which that sin demanded. It is not meant to revive the



confuted fancy of some ancient philosophers, that, if pure and faultless virtue were embodied in a living form, it might walk through this world without molestation or pain. Everything that comes within our guilty and disordered atmosphere must share the vicissitudes and the storms which agitate and deform it. And, although Jesus did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, He was persecuted, afflicted, and oppressed. What is meant, and what goes a great way towards accounting for the difficulty with which we are now contending is, that, in very many instances in which righteous men perish, or are exposed to hardship, it can be traced, not so properly to their righteousness, as to the imperfection of their righteousness. An illustration of this may be gathered from the views and conduct of righteous men, in reference to the very subject which we are now discussing—the subject of moral government.

It is the dictate of reason and the doctrine of revelation, that all things are under the government of One Infinite and Eternal Mind, in the wisdom and goodness of whose arrangements it is at once our duty and our happiness to repose with unshaken confidence. A man cannot, in any sense of the word, be called just, or righteous, or virtuous, who has not a clear perception, and a firm hold of this truth. It ought, however, at the same time, to be distinctly understood, that the Divine Providence neither dispenses

nor interferes with the exercise of human prudence and human activity. If God regulated the affairs of the world, without any regard to the exertions of men, it would put an end to everything like moral government, and reduce His intelligent creatures to the state of inactive matter, which must passively take the shape and the position which an external power assigns to it. Plain, however, as this truth is, there are just and virtuous men who do not see it in all its plainness. They are so full of the propriety and obligation of humility and resignation—they are so much prepared to acquiesce in everything that befalls them, that they do not employ, with sufficient earnestness, or sufficient energy, the means which they have of avoiding difficulty or averting danger. They have learned the lesson of submission so well, that they are for repeating it, when it is not at all called for. They are much more ready to exercise their patience than their activity, and are for bearing evils, which may only have been intended to rouse and to quicken them. They seem to think, that the wonderful deliverances, which, they read, God at times wrought for His people, may be manifested in their behalf. They forget the standing declaration of Scripture upon this subject, that by knowledge shall the just be delivered. A knowledge of the plan of Divine Providence would lead them to deliverance. But they assume the attitude of repose, which was suited to a peculiar dispensation; and, while they should be bestirring themselves

with all their activity, they are saying with a mistaken confidence, Let us stand still and see what God will do for us. And thus it is that they perish, thus it is that they fall into difficulties, from which a proper degree of prudence and exertion would have saved them. They may even be said to perish *in* or *by* their righteousness, inasmuch as it is by trusting to Providence; but, inasmuch as the trusting is not warranted, it is more correct to say, that they perish through the imperfection of their righteousness, through the imperfection of those views of Providence which they entertain.

On the other hand, the wicked have no faith in a Divine Providence, and, consequently, they are not liable to fall into any mistakes as to the nature of that guidance or help, which its measures may afford. They place all their reliance on their own exertions and skill, and they work with a fearful activity to bring about their ends. They rise up early, and take rest late. They seize and improve every favourable opportunity. They wait for all times, and watch for all tides. They have no higher objects to dim their worldly views, or to relax their worldly exertions. They look upon the things of time as their chief good, and they pursue them with the greatest activity. The light of eternity never dazzles them, and they advance with eager and unfaltering step towards the object of their wishes. They are wiser in their generation than the children of the light; and thus it sometimes hap-

pens, that the latter, by entertaining imperfect views of the Providence of God, and reposing, with ungrounded confidence, on its interposition, allow themselves to sink into inactivity, and are brought into difficulty, while the former, by their watchfulness and dexterity, avoid the evils to which their conduct naturally exposes them, and prolong their life in prosperity and wickedness.

Another illustration of the point, for which it is now contended, may be drawn from the fact, that just and righteous men are very often brought into difficulty, from entertaining erroneous or defective views of the conduct of human life, and of their behaviour to their fellow-men.

It is the peculiar excellence of that system of human duty which is enjoined in Scripture, that it steers clear of every extreme. It unites the deepest and most entire dependence upon God, with the most strenuous and persevering exertions of our own. It does not leave us to choose between a life of contemplation and a life of activity, but enjoins us to be ‘diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord in all things.’ It teaches, not only to hold fast our integrity, but to walk circumspectly, and to join the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove; that we may be perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto every good work. It addresses us, not only as the expectants of heaven, but also as the inhabitants of earth; and, while it fans and cherishes our



aspirations after the purity and glory of the one, directs us, at the same time, to discharge the duties, and to guard against the evils and dangers of the other. It frequently happens, however, that just and righteous men do not take a thorough view, nor a firm hold, of their vocation, in all its variety and extent. Either from the mistake which has already been alluded to, from entertaining wrong views of the Providence of God, and fancying that it stands pledged to supersede or supply their exertions, or from their entertaining views of heavenly things so strong and lively, as to make them think too little of this world and its concerns, just and righteous men are frequently deficient in that activity and prudence, which are as necessary as godliness and honesty to their comfort and success in life. And this is not meant of mere enthusiasts, of men of fancy and of feeling, who exhaust so much of their time and energy, in the external and sentimental parts of religion, as to unfit and indispose them for paying a proper attention to its practical parts. The term just, or righteous, or religious, can, in no sense, be applied to those who wilfully and habitually neglect the duties of their station. Religion, when it comes to be resolved into ecstasies and raptures, loses its nature and its name; and they who are not careful and diligent to provide for their own household, how lofty soever their pretensions, and how showy soever their appearances, have substantially denied the faith, and are worse than infidels. But there are men who

acknowledge the importance, and submit themselves to the influence of religion, who see and exemplify the connection between profession and practice, and who, although they cannot perhaps be accused of any very glaring or culpable neglect of the moral or relative duties, yet do not go through them with that alertness and discretion, which are so becoming and useful. They see, most distinctly, the duty and importance of walking in humility and devotion, before that Great Being who gave, and who upholds and cheers their existence ; but they do not see with the same clearness, nor feel with the same force, the necessity of those kind and conciliating manners which would contribute so much to their worldly happiness and prosperity. They hold fast their integrity, and will not let it go ; but they are too tenacious of things, which are in themselves indifferent, and do not yield, with sufficient readiness, to the weaknesses or prejudices of those who are around them. In the language of Scripture, they frequently destroy themselves, that is, injure their temporal interest, by being too rigid and uncomplying in their manners, and by not observing a becoming gentleness and prudence. In being what is commonly called righteous overmuch, in being too stern and severe upon points which are in themselves indifferent, they are, properly speaking, deficient in that righteousness which is required of them. It becomes them to be civil and courteous, as well as to be honourable and upright. While they have no toleration for any

thing that is base or sinful, they are bound to bear with the weaknesses and the prejudices of those around them, and to preserve their consciences, void of offence both towards God and man. Gentleness and meekness are duties required of them, as plainly and as strongly, as integrity and uprightness. Yet it frequently happens that good men, who see the propriety and obligation of the latter, do not see, at least, do not acknowledge, the propriety and obligation of the former. And, while they would shudder and recoil from the thought of injuring another in his property or reputation, they are not sufficiently careful to avoid giving irritation to his feelings or offence to his prejudices; and thus it happens that righteous men often bring themselves into difficulty, by neglecting the gentleness and discretion, the courtesy and prudence which are required of them. On the other hand, men who are deficient in the sterling virtues of integrity and uprightness, may often cultivate with assiduity those manners and habits which may promote their temporal interests, and succeed in acquiring a smooth and insinuating address, which the world either blindly mistakes for gentleness and discretion, or willingly prefers to the bluntness and austerity of the righteous. And thus it happens that the one class get easily through difficulties which impede and overcome the other.

This suggests another remark which goes a good way towards accounting for the prosperity of the

wicked and the adversity of the righteous, without impeaching the wisdom or goodness of God.

II. *A righteous man cannot, and will not, employ any means to promote his interests, or to guard against danger and difficulty, but such as are in conformity with the laws of the strictest honour and integrity.*

Now, although it be true that honesty is the best policy, although the path of virtue be in general the safest and always the best, yet conjunctures do sometimes arise, when a slight deviation from the line of rectitude may conduce for a time towards a man's worldly interest. But a righteous man does not feel himself at liberty to make this deviation, how slight soever it may be. He holds fast his integrity and will not let it go, that his heart may not reproach him so long as he lives. He prefers the peace of his conscience and the favour of his God, to everything that this world can give or promise as the reward of iniquity. To use a plain illustration,—the righteous man proposes to arrive at a certain point by one straight and narrow road which is beset with impediments. He would rather stand still than trespass on the property of others; he would rather encounter a difficulty than avoid it by breaking a fence. The wicked man, however, is chiefly solicitous about getting forward. He has little or no scruple about injuring the feelings or the property of others, and cares not whether he keeps the road or not, provided he is



coming nearer his object. The consequence is, that by his short cuts, he very often overtakes or passes the righteous man, who keeps the straight path, even when it carries him apparently away from the point which he wishes to reach.

It may further be remarked, that, even putting the question of strict righteousness altogether out of sight, circumstances do sometimes occur, in which a course of conduct, which cannot, perhaps, be called positively sinful, may be attended with beneficial effects. But a righteous man will not stoop to such conduct. He abstains not only from evil, but from the very appearance of evil. He stands upon the high ground of honour and integrity. He recollects the precept of Scripture—That which is altogether just shalt thou follow; and, though he may be assailed by difficulty, he will not descend to purchase his security by any accommodations or compliances which are in the remotest degree equivocal. Though the world may excuse, and his advisers sanction them, he listens only to the suggestions of conscience and the dictates of revelation. In the beautiful language of Scripture, he walks on in his integrity, and will rather perish than compromise or sully his righteousness. When tempted to anything that may throw a shadow or a stain upon his character, he uses the firm and manly language of Nehemiah, when he was urged to save his valuable life by retreating into the temple (Neh. vi. 11), “Should such a man as I flee? Who is there, being

as I am, that would go into the temple to save his life ? I will not go in."

A wicked man, however, is not under the same feelings and restraints. He thinks himself at perfect liberty to take any course that may contribute to his temporal advantage, and to do evil, that good, or what he reckons good, may come of it. He stifles the suggestions of conscience, and casts the Divine law behind his back. The principles of truth and justice and honour, are observed and obeyed, only in so far as they contribute to his worldly schemes ; and he scruples not to violate them, when he sees that his interest can be promoted by so doing. Not only accommodation and compliance, but deceit and fraud and violence, are all employed to accomplish his purposes. And thus it sometimes happens, that he extricates himself from difficulties, which a just man would meet with unyielding righteousness—thus it is that the one survives, a sleek and splendid example of successful iniquity, while the other falls a sacrifice to the stern dignity of virtue—thus it is that the just man perisheth in his righteousness, while the wicked man prolongeth his life in wickedness.

III. There is another remark, of a similar kind, which goes a great way towards accounting for the prosperity of the wicked and the adversity of the righteous, without impeaching the Providence of God. It is this,—

*That just men often perish, or are brought into difficulty, through the nobleness and simplicity of their nature, while the wicked prosper and prolong their life, by their suspicion and jealousy.*

What the Christian poet has said of the free and ennobling influence of a belief in Christianity, may be said of that love of virtue, which is one of the happy effects of that belief:—

Generosa Christi secta nobilitat viros,  
Cui quisquis servit, ille vere est nobilis.

—PRUDENTIUS.

Whatever may have been the previous habits and dispositions of the soul, so soon as it becomes truly Christian, it becomes truly noble. He who makes himself familiar with the bright examples and the lofty precepts of Scripture, will gradually imitate and obey them. When he comes out from the sanctuary of his contemplations, his face shines with a lustre which the narrow maxims of the world could never generate. His heart is animated and enlarged by the spirit of revelation, and nothing that is mean or selfish can find in it a resting-place. It is easy to see, however, that the nobleness and generosity of mind, which religion and a love of virtue inspire and foster, may not, in every case, contribute to a man's success in life; and that, when he descends from holding high converse with the saints and precepts of Scripture, to mingle in the dust and bustle of a selfish and intriguing world,—when he turns from contemplating all that men ought to be,

to find what they really are, he may often be exposed to difficulty through that very righteousness and noble-mindedness which he has been so desirous to cultivate. A man of high principles and honourable feelings is unable to anticipate, or provide against, all the devices of the selfish and the designing. He is too confident in the honesty and integrity of those around him. Measuring others by himself, he is unwilling to take up an ill report against his neighbour. 'It is a joy to the just to do judgment;' and the satisfaction with which he reposes in the honesty of his own intentions, and the rectitude of his own conduct, exposes him to the artifices of the world. The nobleness and generosity of his mind will not permit him to think of the meanness and duplicity of others. It gives him pain to be jealous or suspicious. Being free from guile himself, he is unwilling to ascribe it to others. The openness and generosity of his heart expose him to the artifices of the selfish and designing, and he is led on, step after step, till at length he sinks under difficulty, and may even perish in his righteousness. In illustration of this, take a fact recorded by the prophet Jeremiah (chap. xl. 14-16). Gedaliah was appointed governor over the remnant of the Jews, after the Babylonish captivity. Twice he received express intelligence of a conspiracy that was formed against his life. At first he refused to give credit to the information, and sharply rebuked the person who brought it. And when another of his



friends offered to cut off the traitor who was practising against his life, Gedaliah generously replied, 'Thou shalt not do this thing; for thou speakest falsely concerning Ishmael.' His noble nature gave no entertainment to the report till it was too late to prevent the mischief, for we read, in the following chapter, that the traitor actually accomplished his purpose. And thus a just man may be said to have perished in his righteousness, and to have lost his life through that candour and integrity which prevented him from believing evil of another, and led him to ascribe to one who was altogether unworthy, the principles of honour and rectitude which regulated his own conduct.

On the other hand, a wicked man is always fearful and jealous. The stratagems which he may have practised himself teach him how to guard against the attacks of others. A sense of his own want of principle leads him to think and to believe the worst of those around him. He is, therefore, continually on his guard. The noise of a falling leaf rouses him. He starts at his own shadow. He sleeps, like the fabled giant, with his club in his hand. The least alarm throws him into a posture of defence. And thus it happens, that through his precaution and jealousy, he sometimes prolongs his life in his wickedness, and, as may be affirmed without heresy, he is saved by his infidelity and distrust.

These remarks may serve to show that, while, in a

certain sense, righteous men may be said to be exposed to difficulty, through or on account of their righteousness, yet that, in another and more correct sense, it is through the imperfection of their righteousness that they are exposed to difficulty. In attending to one part of their duty, they are apt to overlook another.

In holding fast their integrity, they sometimes let go their prudence and discretion; in trusting to the Providence of God, they forget the necessity of their own exertions; or, in the singleness and simplicity of their heart, they place too much confidence in others, and thus bring themselves into difficulty. But, if the righteous were *more righteous*—if they were upright, without being austere, if they saw that the guardianship of Providence gives no encouragement to indolence—and, if they did not, in their own dignity, forget the baseness of others, they would escape, not perhaps all, but many, of the difficulties into which they now fall. On the other hand, it is not the natural nor ordinary effect of wickedness to prosper or prolong the life of man; and, if the wicked escape the difficulties to which the righteous are exposed, they fall into others which are worse. For example,—to speak the truth is a very plain and a very important duty, but not always a very safe or a very pleasant one. A good man, who wants discretion, may speak the truth when it is not absolutely necessary for him to do so, and thus expose himself to the disagreeable consequences, without any proper cause. Or, the case

may be, that it is absolutely necessary for him to speak, and he must speak the truth and take the consequences. Now, a bad man may have enough of worldly wisdom to hold his tongue, when he sees that speaking the truth will produce disagreeable results. Or, if it be necessary for him to speak, then, perhaps, he will not tell the truth, but a pleasant lie. By doing so, he escapes a difficulty which a good man would encounter. But his escape is only for a time, and it is at the risk of running into greater difficulty; for, should the true state of the case be discovered, then the difficulty, which was postponed by his falsehood, will come back upon him with aggravated weight; so that, even on a worldly computation, it may be as well to meet the difficulty in its first, rather than in its second and more formidable, shape. As to those difficulties, which may and ought to be avoided by a proper degree of prudence and discretion, it is plain that, if God were to interfere to prevent righteous men from running into such difficulties, or, if He were to interfere to prevent the wicked from saying anything untrue, or doing anything unfair, for the purpose of avoiding difficulties, there would be an end to everything like moral government; and while, by the one part of the supposition, the wickedness of the wicked would be lessened, by the other part of it, a stop would be put to the formation of the human character, and the exercise of some of the most exalted virtues which adorn it. If the righteous were not made to feel the

consequences of their indiscretion and improvidence, how could they ever learn to be prudent and discreet? And, when the wicked, in any instance, do what is proper and becoming, why should they not be allowed to reap the natural reward of their conduct? This leads to another view of the matter, and to the remark,—

IV. *That the adversity of the righteous can sometimes be traced to their own folly and misconduct, while the prosperity of the wicked can be traced to some good qualities which they possess.*

A man who is pious and humane may yet fail in another department of duty, and, by slothfulness and inattention, bring himself to poverty; or, he may be passionate and imprudent, and, by some unguarded expression, bring himself into difficulty and disgrace. But, in all such instances, the Providence of God is clear of blame, and the man is suffering the consequences of his own folly.

On the other hand, a man, who may justly be called a wicked man, may not be altogether destitute of good qualities. Though utterly regardless of his duty towards God, he may have much to recommend him to his fellow-men. He may have a constitutional or a cultivated kindliness of feeling, and of manner, and the goodwill of those around him will contribute much to his happiness and success in life. He may be sober and diligent, active and prudent; and, by



these means, his temporal affairs may flourish. But there is no good ground surely for raising an outcry about the prosperity of such a man: for it is quite unreasonable to require, that wickedness, in one respect, should prevent the advantages of virtue in another respect; or that virtue, in one respect, should exempt from the pernicious consequences of vice in another respect. ‘God could not give heaven to the Romans,’ said one of the Christian Fathers (Augustine), ‘because of their unbelief; but He gave them the empire of the world, because they were temperate and brave.’ Actions, which are *materially* right, though they proceed from no right principle,<sup>1</sup> tend to promote the happiness and prosperity of individuals. And God, though He cannot approve the motive, does not interrupt the effect of such actions. He wishes all men to taste the riches of His liberality. And why should our eye be evil because He is good? One man may be temperate, because he is careful of his health or loves his money; another may be temperate because he fears God and hates evil; but both will be the better for refraining from excess and folly, for God is good to the evil and unthankful.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ‘In the scholastic ages, an action *good in itself* was said to be *materially* good, and an action done with a right intention was called *formally* good.’—REID, *Active Powers, Essay*, v. ch. 4.

<sup>2</sup> In executing vengeance upon the bloody house of Ahab, Jehu had no true regard for the command or the glory of God, but followed the impulse of his own cruelty and ambition, yet he received

In this view of the matter, many of the events of ordinary life, which are complained of as irregularities, may be regarded as proofs and examples of a superintending Providence. The distinction between the tendency of virtue and vice is much more marked, and much more accurately observed, than is usually imagined. There are evident traces of a moral government, begun and carrying on before us; and, instead of fretting at a few seeming irregularities, we ought to wait with patience, and look forward with confidence, to its complete and final accomplishment. For, if we will but calmly consider, we may discover, both by the light of nature and from revelation, many wise and good reasons, why the righteous and the wicked should not be more fully separated than they are at present, but should be equally exposed to the trials and difficulties of life.

the reward of his service; and such was the composing effect of this severe example, that his children sat upon the throne of Israel unto the fourth generation. In going up against the proud city of Tyre, the King of Babylon was prompted by the love of plunder and dominion; but because his conquest contributed to the glory of God and the good of His people, he was rewarded for it. 'For thus saith the Lord, I have given the land of Egypt unto the King of Babylon, for the labour wherewith he served against it, because he wrought for Me, saith the Lord.'—Ezek. xxix. 18 and 19.

## CHAPTER VII.

WISE AND GOOD ENDS ANSWERED BY THE  
PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED IN THIS LIFE.

THEY who bring forward the prosperity of wicked men in this life, as occasioning difficulties regarding the wisdom and goodness of the Deity, must be understood as demanding, either that wicked men should not be allowed to attain to prosperity in this life, or that, if they do attain to it, they should be deprived of it. Now, wise and good reasons may be adduced against either or both of these demands.

I. *The prosperity of the wicked may be accounted for from the very nature of all government, and especially of moral government.*

It is necessary to all government, that there be certain fixed principles or general laws, upon the permanence and result of which the subjects of the government may depend. If a stone gravitated towards the earth one day, and remained suspended in the air the next; or if vice promoted the reputation

and health of one man, while it ruined the reputation and health of another, it is plain that there could be no room, and no reason, for calculation and foresight. Accordingly, we find that, both in the natural and moral world, there are certain great principles according to which things are governed and guided; and these principles being known, and their operation fixed, there is both room and reason for intelligent beings to regulate their conduct accordingly. It deserves, however, to be noticed, that while these principles and laws are sufficiently known, and sufficiently stable, to answer the great ends contemplated, they are not such as to exclude every kind or degree of evil. And, neither in the natural, nor in the moral world, does God think fit, on every occasion, to interfere to avert the mischief, which may incidentally arise from the application and evolution of those principles and laws, which He hath laid down as the rule of His procedure and government. For example, God hath made many wise and benevolent arrangements for the support and defence of the various tribes of living beings. Yet these arrangements, although sufficient for the great purposes to be answered, are not so complete as to prevent the occurrence of partial evil. And individuals are destroyed by the rapacity of others, and sometimes a whole species perishes for want of sustenance. This might be prevented, by breaking in upon the ordinary arrangements of the natural world. And God might feed the ravens, when they were



deprived of their usual food, in a way as remarkable as that in which they were once employed to administer sustenance to His famishing prophet. But He does not see fit to do so. In like manner, God hath made certain arrangements for the reward of virtue, and for the punishment of vice, even in this life. But men are so connected with one another, and with the objects around them, that these arrangements do not always produce their full effect. Now, if it be not a fair objection against the wisdom and goodness of God in the natural world, that the laws and arrangements of nature, which are good upon the whole, do not always prevent partial evil, neither ought it to be an objection against the moral government of God, that the good and bad consequences of virtue and vice do not invariably take place. This could be done by particular interpositions. But it becomes neither the majesty nor the wisdom of God to tamper with His ordinary arrangements, nor to interrupt the course of His government, upon occasions of little importance.

*Besides*—If the conduct of wicked men be in any measure in accordance with the principles of the Divine government, why should they be deprived of the beneficial consequences which God hath annexed to such conduct? This would be totally inconsistent with His method of ruling men. For, were the ordinary operations of Providence frequently interrupted, it would create a total uncertainty with regard to events, and put an end to every thing like forethought and

caution, since men would never depend upon the consequences of their conduct, but must either anxiously dread, or presumptuously hope for, the interference of some supernatural power.

*Further*—Such is the condition of human life, such are the connections and relations subsisting between the righteous and the wicked, that the one could not be exclusively punished, and the other exclusively rewarded. Were God, for example, to bless the fields of the righteous with a supernatural abundance, the wicked would still share in the benefit; and were He to smite with mildew the fields of the wicked, society in general would suffer by the infliction; so that a second set of miracles would be necessary to rectify the inconveniences of the first, and the Divine government, instead of advancing, with steady and dignified step, towards the accomplishment of its objects, would present a series of broken and almost ineffectual movements. For, under the present constitution of things, it is absolutely impossible, fully to punish the bad, without in some measure affecting the good. And this leads to the remark—

II. *That wicked men are sometimes permitted to prosper in the world, because the punishment of them would affect the virtuous and good.*

In this life, there is scarcely an individual who stands so completely insulated and apart from others, that what affects him, will not, in some measure, affect

more. The most abandoned wretch who wanders through the ways of profligacy, has still some related to him by the ties of kindred or sympathy, to feel and to lament his degradation and fall. Even those monsters in human form, who by their oppression and wickedness, are sometimes permitted to afflict and disgust the nations subjected to their insolence, have still some touch of our common nature about them, which makes some one count kindred with them. No man ever deserved worse of his country or of his kind, than did the Roman Emperor Nero; yet, we read that even his grave, though dug by the vengeance, and filled with the curses of an oppressed and insulted people, received a few solitary flowers from some pitying hand. The relations and sympathies which subsist between the righteous and the wicked, ought not to prevent the civil magistrate from executing justice upon those who violate the rights of society; but it should certainly make us think more highly of the goodness of God, to consider that one reason, why He does not fully punish the wicked in this life, may be, that such punishment would fall partly upon the righteous. A wicked father, for example, could not be punished, without involving in the punishment an innocent family; and, on the other hand, the punishment of a wicked son might plunge in misery his unoffending parents. A wicked master, if visited according to his deserts, might reduce to beggary a number of honest dependants.

Besides, if the punishment of the wicked were to be complete in this life, then they must be punished for their evil thoughts and intentions, as well as for their evil deeds. But these thoughts and intentions, being known only to themselves, and to Him who searcheth their hearts, the punishment of them could not be understood nor appreciated by the world; and those who had contrived to keep up a fair appearance, would be thought to be punished beyond their deserts, and the Providence of God surrounded with more mystery than at present. And if wicked men were uniformly to be punished in this life for those sins which they have succeeded in keeping secret, and for that malignity and worthlessness of heart which no penetration can always discover, no confidence nor safety could be found in human society. Instead of cultivating the ordinary connections, and entering into the ordinary relations of life, men would be suspicious of, and fly from one another; the business of the world could not be carried on; and, instead of the virtuous being made more happy than they now are, all mankind would be separated in distrustful solitude, and deprived of many of the benefits and blessings which they now enjoy. If men were to be punished in this life, fully, and according to their real demerits, then we must be endowed with knowledge truly to discern their character, otherwise we could not judge of the justice or propriety of their punishment. And not only so, but we must be able to get



on without the help or society of one another, otherwise we might be involved in the punishment of those with whom we find it necessary to associate ourselves. Such a mode of dispensation might suit that state in which it is said, they neither 'marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.' But such a mode of dispensation would be altogether unsuitable to the present dark and imperfect state, in which man is not sufficient for his own happiness, and is naturally led to form relations with those around him, although he is altogether unable to discern their true character; and where the virtuous, from their connection and sympathy with those who are not so virtuous, are liable to share in all the calamities which may be drawn down by their wickedness. In such a mixed and imperfect state, the tares and the wheat must be allowed to grow together, as the one could scarcely be rooted up without destroying the other. This was Abraham's plea when he interceded with the Lord for the men of Sodom: 'Wilt Thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked.' And so strong is this plea, so great is the regard which God shows to those who serve Him, that if there had been ten righteous men in Sodom, the whole city would have been preserved. The evil which was to come upon Judah was delayed till the good King Josiah should be gathered to his fathers. And in Isaiah lxxv. 8, the Lord is represented as saying, 'As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not,

for a blessing is in it, so will I do for My servants' sake, that I may not destroy them all.' Such representations are in perfect accordance with facts of frequent occurrence, and with the conclusions of sober reason ; and, in the face of such representations, and facts, and conclusions, nothing can be more unreasonable than to upbraid the Providence of God for sometimes permitting the way of the wicked to prosper. That way is permitted to prosper, because the full and adequate punishment of it would extend, in its effects, beyond the wicked, and involve the innocent.

III. *The distributions of this life, in so far as they are unequal, seem to be essential to the very existence of religion and morality.*

Were virtue invariably and visibly rewarded, and vice invariably and visibly punished, in this life, these rewards and punishments, always staring men in the face, would overpower the freedom of their minds, and leave little or no room for liberty of choice. Such an arrangement would be totally inconsistent with a state of trial and probation, and would remove us from that condition for which all our powers and capacities are fitted and designed. In this case, there would be no room for the exhortation to walk by faith and not by sight. All would be sight. But hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? Were the rewards and punishments full and complete, and were these rewards and punishments

sensibly and continually present to us, they would so urgently press upon our minds, that it would be impossible for us not to believe in God, and next to impossible not to obey Him ; and being, in some sense, compelled to believe and obey, what moral excellence would there be in our piety and virtue ? In such circumstances, it would be no more praiseworthy to abstain from a bad action than to abstain from throwing ourselves into certain danger, or to do a good action than to lay hold of an offered advantage. In short, there would be no more room for the exercise of our rational and moral powers ; but we would be always in the situation of children, who act under the influence of a rod, or a bribe held out to them. But, as things are wisely arranged—as the wicked are not excluded from prosperity, nor the righteous from adversity—as the distributions of Providence are apparently unequal—we are left free and unconstrained ; and whether, in any particular case, we act virtuously or viciously, is a matter of choice, not of necessity. Were virtue, in every instance, immediately followed by happiness, there would then be a natural necessity, rather than a moral obligation, to practise it. We would then embrace truth as a delight, and pursue virtue as a pleasure. Virtue and truth would attract the mind, in the same manner as light and heat affect the body. The moral scheme of things, which is now declarative of God's moral attributes, must be displaced and overruled by a mechanical system, a species

of necessity or fate. For, if wickedness were, in every instance, and immediately, followed by adequate punishment, man would become a kind of machine, determined by mechanical impulse. In such a state, if there were no vice, there could be as little virtue. There could be no room for reason and reflection, for steadiness in following the good and fleeing from the evil, nor for praise or blame, reward or punishment.

2 'Were every single action, as soon as performed, to be followed with its proper reward or punishment; were wickedness, in every instance of it, struck with immediate vengeance, and were goodness always at ease and prosperous; the characters of men could not be formed; virtue would be rendered interested and mercenary; some of the most important branches of it could not be practised; adversity, frequently its best friend, could never find access to it; and all those trials would be removed which are requisite to train it up to maturity and perfection. Thus would the regular process of a moral government be disturbed, and its purposes defeated; and, therefore, the very facts which are made objections to it, appear, as mankind are now constituted, to be required by it.'—PRICE, *Review of Morals*, 3d ed., p. 651.

IV. And while the scheme, according to which prosperity and adversity are distributed in this life, is essential to the very existence of virtue, *It is peculiarly fitted to call forth the passive virtues.*



A state of discipline and exertion is the proper atmosphere for a being like man. Were it possible to transplant him to a scene of perfect equality and repose, how much soever it might add to his ease, it would certainly detract from his improvement. As in the natural world, man is not made for perpetual summer and cloudless skies, but, by the wintry storm, is called on to exert his abilities for procuring shelter and defence, so, in the moral world, the darkness and difficulty which surround him, render many an exertion necessary, which, in a more clear and equal state of things, would have no place. If good men were allowed constantly to proceed in a smooth and flowery path, if, meeting with no discouragement or obstruction, they were surrounded on all hands with congratulation and success, they would sink into indifference and inactivity. *Marcet sine adversario virtus*, said Seneca. ‘Virtue grows lean without opposition.’ In a long calm the waters stagnate and putrefy; but the storm, by setting them in motion, restores their salubrity. In like manner, the hardships which the virtuous are called to encounter, are intended to rouse and quicken. ‘Fear not those things,’ said Seneca, ‘which the gods apply as spurs to the human mind.’ Were there no temptation and trial in human life, there would be no room for the exercise and improvement of the passive virtues. Fortitude grows strong by struggling with difficulty, and patience learns her perfect work in the midst of tribulation and

suffering. Had luxury no gratification, dishonesty no gains, and corruption no bribes, where would be the excellence of self-denial and restraint, of disinterested integrity and of honourable poverty? To conquer a world that had no enemy to oppose you, and no temptation to try you, would be a victory without a triumph, or a triumph without glory. Had vice no allurements, and those who yield to it no prosperity—were wickedness, in its commission and its consequences, uniformly attended with pain and evil—were wicked men excluded from all share in the bounties of Providence—the virtuous would lose many of the motives which now stimulate them to virtue. The existence and prosperity of wicked men in the world, render many an exertion necessary, which would not be called for in a more perfect state of things.<sup>1</sup> The virtuous are stirred up to greater watchfulness and humility, to greater patience and trust in God, and greater kindness and charity towards their fellowmen.

At the same time it may be noticed,

<sup>1</sup> There is some soul of goodness in things evil,  
 Would men observingly distil it out :  
 For our bad neighbour makes us early stirrers,  
 Which is both healthful and good husbandry ;  
 Besides, they are our outward consciences,  
 And preachers to us all ; admonishing,  
 That we should 'dress us fairly for our end,  
 Thus we may gather honey from the weed,  
 And make a moral of the devil himself.

—HENRY V., *Act iv., Scene i.*

V. *That the wicked, by being spared and prospered in the world, are allowed time and opportunity to repent.*

If the plan of Providence were different from what it is—if instant and adequate punishment always followed vice, there would be no room for penitence and amendment on the part of the vicious, and no scope for patience and endeavours to reclaim them on the part of the virtuous. The existing arrangements of Providence, however, testify the long-suffering and goodness of God, and call for the exercise of patience and kindness from us. As we say of the sick, ‘while there is life there is hope,’ so it may be said of the vicious, while they are spared and protected, they may repent. While they are permitted to share the goodness of God, their hearts may yet be touched and turned unto Him. By witnessing the dignity and the peace of virtue, they may come to see the error of their own ways, and strive to reform them. And thus, through the wise and merciful arrangements of Providence, great advantage may arise, both to those who are thus turned from the evil of their ways, and to those who, by their example, or entreaties and admonitions, have been instrumental in turning them. We are ready to cry out with impatience against the prosperous wicked, Cut them down, why should they cumber the ground? But God is more merciful towards them than their fellow-men would be; and, although they have hitherto been like

so many barren trees, He spares, and prunes, and shelters, and enriches them, for another season, in the hope that they may yet bring forth the precious fruits of repentance.

And even, though the goodness of God should not lead men, as it is designed to do, to repentance, let us not conclude that the councils of His Providence have failed. For,

VI. *By being spared and prospered, the punishment of those who continue vicious comes to be more signal and complete.*<sup>1</sup>

It has been remarked, that no one becomes altogether vicious on a sudden. *Nemo repente fit turpissimus*. Men venture with timidity on vicious practices, and their first offences are, generally, not of a very daring kind. It takes a time to extinguish the natural feelings of shame, and to overcome the reproaches of conscience. It takes a time before men come to sin presumptuously, and with a high hand. Now, if instant and adequate punishment followed upon every, even the slightest, deviation from the path of virtue, one great end of punishment, which is to warn and deter others, could not be answered. The offending person might know the cause of punishment having overtaken him; but the same reasons which led him to conceal his sin would lead him to conceal its punish-

<sup>1</sup> Deus est auctor mali quod est pœna; non autem mali quod est culpa.—S. THOM. *S. Theol.* pars 1., *Quæst.* 49, *Art.* 11.



ment. Men would thus be completely in the dark as to the origin of his punishment and the lessons to be derived from it. In short, the sinner himself would be the only person who had the means of deriving benefit or instruction from such a mode of dispensation, and the beneficial effects of his case could not extend beyond his own bosom. But, when punishment is delayed till the vices of the sinner have become notorious, then his example has a more wide and lasting effect,—then all the land may hear and fear, and no more do any such wickedness. Had Haman (Esther, ch. iii.) been punished for his pride and insolence of heart, while he remained in his native obscurity, his punishment would have had comparatively little effect. But when he had his seat set above princes, and when all the servants in the king's gate bowed before him, his fall was as conspicuous as had been his elevation and his malice and oppression.

. . . Jam non ad culmina rerum  
Injustos crevisse queror; tolluntur ad altum,  
Ut lapsu graviore ruant.

—CLAUDIAN.

If the wicked were to stumble at their first entrance on the path of vice, their example would not deter others; but when God permits them to reach the very pinnacle of their ambition, then there is something awfully instructive in their punishment and fall. Then those gifts of Providence, which we are so apt to grudge them, are seen only to have accele-

rated their ruin, and, through their carelessness and abuse, their prosperity may be said to have destroyed them. It is in this sense that we are to understand the Scripture, which saith (Ps. xcii. 7), ‘When the wicked spring up as grass, and when the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is, that they shall be destroyed.’ The warnings which they neglect, and the benefits which they abuse, serve to render their punishment more speedy and striking. ‘This,’ said Job (xxvii. 13), ‘is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage of oppressors, that they shall receive of the Almighty. If his children be multiplied, it is for the sword, and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread. He buildeth his house as a moth, and as a booth that the keeper (of a vineyard) maketh. Terrors take hold on him as waters; a tempest stealeth him away in the night. Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place.’ But even, although punishment should not overtake the wicked in this life, let it not be imagined that they have escaped. There is a state beyond the present, in which the justice of God shall be fully vindicated. And this leads to the remark, in the seventh and last place, viz. :—

VII. *That the temporal prosperity of the wicked may be permitted and prolonged, in order to raise our thoughts to the immortality which awaits us.*

The great doctrine of a future state, while it ac-

counts most satisfactorily for the unequal distributions of this life, derives one of its strongest proofs from the existence of these very inequalities. For, while the world furnishes plain and convincing evidences of a moral government, the acts of this government are neither complete nor universal, as the wicked are not all punished, nor the righteous fully rewarded. And since, under the pure administration of an Almighty Being, a perfect and impartial discrimination of character must take place some time or other, and since this does not take place in the present state, it follows, that this life is but the preparation for another, where the promises and beginnings of God's justice will be fulfilled, and where every one shall receive according to the deeds which he hath done, whether they have been good or evil. Now, had things been otherwise arranged in the world, we should have lost this most convincing and consolatory argument in favour of a future state. For, on the one hand, had there been no traces of a moral government,—had neither the righteous in any degree been rewarded, nor the wicked in any degree punished, in this life, we might have been tempted to despair of any just retributions in the next. So, on the other hand, had the good and evil of this life been weighed out to men, in exact proportion to their merit and demerit, as there would have been less desire, so there would have been less belief, of a future state. To confirm us in the belief of a Divine Providence, it was necessary that we should

have some proofs of God's distinguishing between the good and the bad ; and to confirm us in the belief of a future state, it was no less necessary that this distinction should not be universal nor complete. As things stand, we cannot reflect upon the instances of reward and punishment, without concluding, that 'verily there is a God who judgeth in the earth ;' and we cannot observe the evils and misfortunes to which the righteous are exposed, without believing, that He will finally reward and bless them. The spectacle of the tares and the wheat growing together,—of the righteous and the wicked living under the same general laws,—of individuals, widely differing in their moral character and conduct, exposed to similar trials and hardships,—above all, of vice triumphant and prosperous, while virtue is suffering and dejected ;—it is this spectacle, which awakens in every thinking mind the hope that is full of immortality, and makes us turn from the irregularities of time, to contemplate the morals of eternity.

God 'hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness.' This fact, suggested by reason, and confirmed by revelation, should solve all our difficulties. We know but in part, and see but in part. We are admitted to witness only a small portion of the great drama of Providence ; and, instead of rashly blaming the whole, it becomes us patiently to wait for the conclusion, at which all must be present. The scene, which now seems so dark and



intricate, will then be unravelled. To this we may look forward with confidence ; but we ought never to imagine, that God is bound to accomplish all His designs in the few years for which He permits us to contemplate them. Let us rest assured, that He will do everything in its proper season ; and, though the righteous may be in adversity,<sup>1</sup> and the wicked prosperous, during the short life that now is, let us remember, that they have an eternity before them, during which the difference can be adjusted. The light afflictions of the one may work out for them a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory ; while the sinful prosperities of the other may only aggravate their guilt and punishment. The misery which awaits the wicked will be increased, by the recollection of those admonitions and advantages which they here received and abused ; while the happiness of the righteous will be enhanced, by the remembrance of the trials and temptations through which they have entered into the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiasticus xxxix. 16. 'That all the works of the Lord are exceeding good, and whatsoever He commandeth shall be accomplished, in due season, and none may say, What is this ? Wherefore is that ? For, at time convenient, they shall all be sought out.—All the works of the Lord are good, and He will give every needful thing, in due season ; so that a man cannot say, this is worse than that, for in time they shall all be approved.'

## CHAPTER VIII.

WISE AND GOOD ENDS ANSWERED BY THE ADVERSITY  
OF THE RIGHTEOUS IN THIS LIFE.

JUST and consolatory views of the nature and use of adversity can only be derived from the doctrine of a future state, as that doctrine is made known to us in the Scriptures. The Scriptures demand not the useless triumph of philosophy<sup>1</sup> over nature; but, while they permit the expression of sorrow, prohibit the indulgence of despair, and exhort to the exercise of patience, not by urging the cheerless reflection, that adversity is no evil, but by presenting the animating hope, that it may become the instrument of good. They admit, that no chastening—for this is the name which they give to adversity—that no chastening, for the present, seemeth to be joyous; but they teach us to look beyond the severities of a correcting Father, to the peaceable fruits of righteousness which they yield—point to the saints who have come out from

<sup>1</sup> Nihil agis O! dolor, quamvis sis molestus, nunquam confitebor te esse malum.—POSIDONIUS, quoted by Cicero, *Tuscul. Disp.*, lib. ii.

tribulation with increased purity—show us the followers of the Lamb, enjoying a happiness which is perfect, as was their patience—and tell us, that our present light and transitory afflictions, are not worthy to be compared with that eternal weight of glory to be revealed. They bid us bear adversity, and acknowledge its use—be resigned, like the Psalmist, and say and feel, like him, that it is good for us that we have been afflicted.

When it is maintained, that wise and good ends are answered by adversity, it is not maintained, that the accomplishment of these ends is its necessary and universal result. Numerous and lamentable are the instances, in which adversity seems only to discover and to aggravate the lurking vices of the human heart. Poverty has pushed many into fraud, and has made thieves of those who, with their wealth, might have retained their honesty. Sickness has called forth impatience, and ripened it into complaint—has cherished the murmurings of the querulous, fretted them into dissatisfaction with the arrangements of Providence, or put the bolder language of accusation into their mouths, and led them to charge God foolishly.<sup>1</sup> Disease, by its interruption, has given to the wicked a keener relish for their guilty pleasures, or, by its severity, has driven them to despair, and agitated the feeble frame of man with

<sup>1</sup> Fortunam, ut fit, obirati, cultum reliquerant Deorum.—TIT. LIV. *lib. i. cap. 31.*

the passions and imprecations of demons. Adversity can be salutary only to those who, by the grace of God, are enabled to meet it with proper views and feelings, and to improve it by suitable exercises. With such aid, which may be obtained by all who sincerely and earnestly seek it, adversity may prove productive of the most beneficial effects, on the whole character of man, whether he be regarded as a religious, as a social, or as an individual being.

*I. Adversity is fitted to produce a thoughtful and humble frame of mind.*

It is very common, but very wrong, to take prosperity as a mark of the Divine favour; and he who is in possession of this fancied pledge, is apt to relax any habits of reflection which he may have had, and to resist every ordinary call to serious consideration. While allowed to go on with success, he never thinks he can be a bad man; or rather, he never thinks seriously at all of his character in the sight of God: for, with the floating apprehensions which he may sometimes feel, there comes up to him the consoling recollection of his present external welfare; and, fancying that, with all his faults, there must still be something good about him, which is the cause of his prosperity, he rests in the vain-glorious delusion, dismisses his fears, and places his hopes of safety in that Mercy, whose past favours he has been unwilling to improve, reluctant even to acknowledge. But adver-



sity, by destroying or removing the ground of his false confidence, leads him to make a more serious examination of his condition and prospects. Like the dart, which made the conqueror feel himself to be mortal, and overturned his proud pretensions to divinity, it casts down his high thoughts of himself, makes him know that he is a sinful creature, and warns him, now that judgment has begun, to correct or remove every cause of offence. His eyes were accustomed to wander, with insatiable eagerness, over the gilded scenes which lay before him; but, when the dark shadows of affliction close around his head, he retires into his own heart, and contemplates his own character. In this painful seclusion, he acquires that knowledge, the want of which has hitherto been his greatest misfortune, the knowledge of himself. He now perceives, that his exemption from adversity may have been a proof of long-suffering on the part of God, but no proof of innocence or worth in him. He discovers, what prosperity could never teach him—what it prevented him from seeing and feeling—that he has been guilty of innumerable errors, and confesses, that his present adversity is nothing more than he has deserved, by his habitual forgetfulness of God and His laws.

‘ Thus, hours of pain have yielded good,  
Which prosperous days refused;  
As plants, though scentless when entire,  
Shed fragrance when they’re bruised.’

This is often alluded to in Scripture, as the peculiar

and salutary tendency of adversity, that it brings a man to a sense and an acknowledgment of his sins. God, who had long been in the midst of them, to bless them and to do them good, is represented as saying to His ungrateful and rebellious people, ‘I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offence.’ When our pleasures are interrupted, or our comforts removed, we are naturally led to ask, ‘Why is it not with us as in times past?’ And it is in this moment of anxious inquiry, that our sin is most likely to find us out.<sup>1</sup> The sons of Jacob, amidst the happiness of intervening years, had forgotten their barbarous treatment of their brother. But, when driven from their native land by the miseries of famine,—when, instead of meeting with the relief of their necessities, they found themselves taken for spies, and saw nothing before them but a tedious imprisonment,—behind them, the untimely death of a disappointed parent,—then their heart smote them, carried them back, in painful retrospect, to the period of jealousy and crime,—made them see, in their present situation, the enormity of their sin, and acknowledge the justness of its punishment.—‘Verily we were guilty concerning our brother, and therefore hath this distress come upon us.’

<sup>1</sup> *Acrius advertunt animos ad religionem,  
Nam veræ voces tum demum, pectore ab imo,  
Eliciuntur, et eripitur persona, manet res.*

It is scarcely possible, indeed, even for uninterrupted prosperity, to keep a man in entire ignorance of sin. There must be pauses in the most systematic pursuit of pleasure,—times of thoughtfulness, even with the most giddy. There are circumstances which do not deserve the name of afflictions, that will sometimes induce a man to review his character and conduct. But then he enters on the task with an inclination to dwell too much on the fair side of things, and a secret predetermination not to find a very unfavourable opinion of himself. The feelings which prompt him to the examination are not strong enough to force him into those serious and humble views of his character, which are as useful as they are painful and true; and he comes out from it in a maudlin state of mind, in which it is difficult to say whether regret or complacency has the predominance,—whether he is more satisfied or displeased with himself. But adversity turns the bias the other, and the right way, and brings along with it a seriousness, which prepares a man for meeting with the greatest defects in his character, gives him a jealousy and suspicion of himself, which is ever on the watch for proofs of deeper guilt, and carries him forward with unshrinking fortitude to the inmost of those many chambers of abomination which may be in his heart. In short, it makes him humble and thoughtful. The hopeful visions of his giddy prosperous days are dissipated, and, with many subjects of painful regret and solemn apprehen-

sion pressing upon his mind, he meets with little in himself to sustain or console him. The more he examines his conduct, the more he discovers of its imperfection. The more he looks into his heart, the more he sees of its alienation from God. He is thus led into that humble, self-abasing frame, which lies at the bottom of everything which is good in human character, which includes so much of religion and its graces. Like David, his sins are ever before him. He sees them in all their number, magnitude, and deformity; and he looks stedfastly at the sight. This constant recollection of his guilt, this abiding sense of his infirmity, prepares him, not only for entertaining deep and solemn views of the Divine Majesty, and of human unworthiness, but also for embracing, with lively, undisputing gratitude, those offers of mercy which are held out to him.

Well might our Saviour say, ‘a rich man,’ that is, a prosperous man, ‘shall scarcely enter into the kingdom of heaven;’ taking that phrase to mean, as it often does mean, accepting the Gospel scheme of salvation. His feelings are all selfish and proud, his habits and pursuits are all earthly and gross, and rise up like a wall of separation between him and everything that is serious and spiritual.<sup>1</sup> But, ‘Blessed are the poor,’ the afflicted, ‘for theirs is the king-

<sup>1</sup> *Ardua res hæc est, opibus non tradere mores,  
Et cum tot Cræsos viceris, esse Numam.*

—MARTIAL, xi. 6.



dom of heaven ;' theirs is the disposition for religion ; theirs is the condition most favourable for making progress in its ways. And to those who think of it as they ought, it is saying a great deal for the usefulness of affliction, that it may be the means of begetting, and that, through Divine grace, it very often is made to beget, that serious and humble turn of mind, which leads a man to the knowledge and reception of truths, in which he has an interest incalculably greater than any which can attach to the passing objects of the world. ' It is good for me that I have been afflicted,' said the Psalmist, ' that I might learn Thy statutes.'

But, supposing a man already to have acquired a firm persuasion of the truth and importance of religion, it may be remarked,—

II. *That adversity is calculated to exercise the strength of his religious principles.*

Before he was afflicted, it could be said of Job, that he was a pious and an upright man, ' one who feared God and eschewed evil.' But still, the question might be put, ' Doth Job fear God for nought ?' Still it might be urged, in abatement of his virtue, that if not altogether produced, it was at least cherished and maintained by the most favourable circumstances : and, when he was held forth as an example of religious and moral worth, it was insinuated, that, for anything which had hitherto been seen, his professions might be hypocritical, and his principles defective ; that he

might lose the credit, and feel the want of sincerity, in the trying moments of distress; that, although prosperity had not seduced, affliction might alienate his heart from God; and that his piety, being merely the mercenary tribute by which he acknowledged the favours of heaven, and solicited their continuance or their increase, he would give his faith to the winds which carried off his wealth, and say, 'Who is the Lord, that I should serve Him?' or testify his belief only by the murmurs of impatience, or the deeper execrations of despair. 'Put forth Thine hand, now, touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face.' But when Job, stripped of everything, but the sackcloth, which faintly expressed his misery, sitting amidst the smoking ruins of his princely fortune, and the mangled bodies of his children, could send forth the voice of pious resignation, from a heart penetrated with grief,—when, smarting under the pains of disease, he could repel the counsels of impatience, and say, with unruffled serenity, 'Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?' he removed all the suspicions and accusations of his enemies, and showed that he possessed a firmness of principle, which was altogether independent of the capricious aid of external circumstances. Nor was this all. He himself<sup>1</sup> ac-

<sup>1</sup> The book of Job may be regarded as a Theodicy, that is, a vindication of God's moral government in this life. Job, not worse, but better, than other men, is afflicted more than other men. He

quired a knowledge of his religious character, which he could not before possess, and a confidence in its stability, which he was not before warranted to entertain. This is a point on which men very often deceive themselves. They are ready to construe what is merely the result of circumstances, into the product of fixed principles,—to mistake the glow of occasional feeling for the warmth of settled affection,—and to fancy that they are animated by pure and steadfast love to God, because, in some very awakening situation, they may have experienced and expressed emotions of attachment and gratitude. Now, when the

utters his complaint; to which his friends reply, that his iniquities have brought his afflictions upon him. He repudiates their charge of hypocrisy, and maintains the sincerity and integrity of his conduct. His friends reiterate their charges. At length, God Himself appears in the drama, and addressing Job, as altogether unable to contend with Him, or even to comprehend the measures of His power or the depths of His wisdom, Job is humbled, and acknowledges his unworthiness. The acknowledgment is accepted, as more honourable to God's moral government in this life, than the pleadings of Eliphaz and his friends, which proceeded upon the ground, that Job had been afflicted for his sins, and in proportion to his sins. The speech of Jehovah represents the scheme of Providence, as inscrutable by man, in the present state. Here we know but in part, and can but prophesy in part. In this view of the matter, Job at length acquiesces in humility and reverence.

The Theodicy of the German philosopher, Kant, is in accordance with this view. He regards the scheme of Providence as imperfectly developed in this life, and, therefore, not fully comprehended, or rather incomprehensible, by us. And Bishop Butler has expressed similar views.—*Analogy*, Ch. iii. and Ch. vii.

testimonies of Divine love are so great, that they may be seen and felt, to believe that God is gracious, is what the weakest faith may attain to : but when all these shall be taken away, and the light of God's countenance obstructed by clouds of adversity, to believe that He is still the same, that His love suffereth no eclipse, that His gifts and callings are without repentance, and that all His paths are mercy and truth to those who keep His covenant, is the act and evidence of a higher faith. It is easy, it is delightful, to celebrate the goodness of God, when we are enjoying the fruits of this Divine perfection, and anticipating their continuance or increase ; but it is equally our part to acknowledge and retain this truth, when our happiness is interrupted or our comforts removed ; because, how much soever our views and feelings with regard to it may vary, the truth is always the same. And, although it might be uncharitable in others to suspect, yet it would be rash in ourselves to conclude, because it is impossible for us to know, that we have attained to a firm persuasion of this truth, till our character has been brought to the test of affliction. ' If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.' If a man let go his sense of the goodness of God, and give up all confidence in His mercy, on the first appearance, or even under the pressure of distress, he has reason to suspect, not merely the stability—for that is proved to be imperfect—but even the sincerity of his feelings and professions. And should



the sight, which he thus acquires of his deficiency, prompt him to strive after clearer and firmer views of the Divine character; should the experience, which he thus obtains of his weakness, make him seek more earnestly the supporting, the uplifting, consolations of religion, he may live to bless adversity as the greatest good which ever befel him, and may date the commencement of the brightest and happiest era of his existence from the gathering of those dark clouds, which threatened to overwhelm him. The peace and joy, which his improvement in religious knowledge and religious experience has diffused over his soul, are, to himself, most delightful evidence of the beneficial effects of his chastening, while the dignity and consistency, which adorn his future conduct, prove to all that it was good for him to have been afflicted, and that the trial of his faith has been to him more precious than gold.

Further, we ought certainly to applaud the man who continues stedfast in the path of duty, even when he has the strongest inducements to do so; because the strongest inducements may be resisted, and lamentable experience shows us, that they are often resisted. But we contemplate, with higher approbation, the character of him who maintains his faith and his integrity amidst scenes of persecution and distress. The Spirit of Glory, saith St Peter, rests upon the suffering.<sup>1</sup> Difficulty, if not essential to the existence,

<sup>1</sup> Omnes adeo vestri viri fortes, quot in exemplum prædicatis, ærumnis suis inclyti floruerunt.—MINUT. FELIX.

adds greatly to the dignity of virtue ; and a good man struggling with distress has been pronounced a spectacle for the eye of heaven. It is a sense of the dangers they encountered, and the difficulties they endured, which has raised the greatest of human characters to the height of our admiration ; and the Saviour Himself was made perfect through suffering. Blot from the life of Paul his perils and watchings, his journeyings and imprisonments, his weariness and painfulness, and, although much may still remain to esteem and to admire, you have taken the brightest beam from that glory, which a revering posterity have poured around his head. Divest the character of the early Christians of that suffering faith which adorned it, and you pull them down from the lofty eminence which they occupy, confounding these tried followers of the cross with the safer disciples of modern times. We may look in vain for instances of such unyielding faith as they displayed ; but wheresoever we see affliction, supported or surmounted by the strength of religion, we see the same spirit, which animated the apostles and martyrs, and behold the exhaustless energies of a principle, which has God and eternity for its objects, and before whose mighty contemplations all the sufferings of time lose their power to move. Faith delights in danger, delights to exercise its strength, and to extend its triumphs, to scatter abroad its defiance, and dissipate every assailing cloud. Like the sun, it shines brighter in the day of storm, and never appears so lovely or sub-

lime as when struggling with the darkness of distress. It acquires new strength and dignity from every trial, and rises above every successive affliction, conquering and to conquer. The joy which follows victory or relief gives vigour to its penetrating eye, its views become close and real, it approaches its object, and sees God before it has ceased to look upon the things of time.

### III. *Adversity calls forth the Christian graces.*

Were it not for adversity there would be no room for the exercise of humility and trust towards God, which are the brightest ornaments of the Christian character. To believe, in opposition to our feelings, that adversity is good for us; to confess, in the midst of its severity, that we have deserved chastisement, and to justify God in inflicting it; to acknowledge, with sincerity and contrition, that we have sinned, and will bear His indignation; to recognise the hand of a Father in the corrections of God, and to declare that, in very faithfulness, He hath afflicted us; to say, in the prospect of approaching distress, Good is the word of God concerning us!—and, under every accumulation of new sorrow, It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth right in His eyes; to commit the keeping of our souls to Him, as to a faithful Creator; to trust that He will not continue His chastening longer than may be necessary for our correction and improvement; to wait with patience for the time when He thinks fit

to send relief; to bear with its delay, and, against hope, to believe in hope; to light the languid eye with joy, and raise the feeble arm in prayer; these are exercises of unassuming piety, which, how much soever they may be obscured by more imposing and ostentatious virtues, are beheld with complacency by Him who, while He resisteth the proud, giveth grace to the humble, and taketh pleasure in those who hope in His mercy. The bright displays of suffering virtue which illuminate the pages of Scripture, are so many proofs of the beautifying influence of affliction; and he who reads, with pious veneration—and this is certainly the feeling which belongs to the exercise—of the recorded faith and patience of the saints and prophets, so far from wanting strength and consolation to bear with distress, will glow with the ardour of imitating their example, and strive to show, by the effects which they have upon himself, that afflictions are still the means which a benevolent parent employs, to form the temper and improve the graces of his children. Seeing that he is compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, he runs with patience the race which is set before him. Above all, when he looks to Jesus, the author and finisher of his faith, who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the Cross and despised the shame—when he considers Him who bore such contradiction of sinners against Himself, he forgets the weakness of his murmuring nature, rises above the impatience of his irritable feelings, and aspires after a



perfect pattern of meek forbearance and devout resignation. His attainments may fall as far short of the dignified serenity of the example, as his light afflictions are unworthy to be compared with the awful sufferings of the Redeemer. But he derives encouragement and support, even from the distant resemblance, and glories in tribulation, as affording him an opportunity to display the exalting influence of the hopes which he cherishes, and to adorn his character with all the virtues and graces to which these hopes give birth. As if called upon to show the power of a religion, which promises to lift its believers above the severest trials, he is animated with the lofty spirit of a witness for God, and proves, to a prosperous and impatient world, the strength and the reality of those heavenly aids, which he expects and obtains. As his sufferings abound, his consolations much more abound. He advances from one degree of grace and of improvement to another, till his character is adorned with all that is dignifying or lovely, and he can pour, round the dark chamber of distress, the mild and pleasing light of holy confidence and pious resignation.

IV. *Adversity is calculated to improve the benevolent feelings.*

We are naturally disposed to pity, and, if possible, to relieve, the sufferings of others. At the same time, it must be admitted that our compassionate feelings are very liable to be injured or destroyed. Continued

prosperity has a peculiar tendency to hurt them. When men are at ease themselves, they are very ready to forget, in the comfort of their own circumstances, the distresses and wants of those who are around them. Besides, the contemplation of misery is very often accompanied with some degree of uneasiness or pain; and the prosperous and happy turn away with impatience from scenes which interrupt their giddy joys, and throw a restraint upon their flowing spirits. Even from the distress of those who are connected with them by the ties of friendship and of blood, they sometimes cruelly retire, and commit to the purchased care of strangers or domestics, those tender offices which repay themselves. Their minds are not prepared for enjoying that calm and serious satisfaction which results from the alleviation of suffering. They have been accustomed to grosser and more tumultuous, or to gayer and lighter, feelings, and shrink from the sight of misery, as from something which would disturb, while it cannot improve, their joys.

The effect of prosperity is not so much to contract, as to possess and occupy, the heart; it does not render men insensible, but indifferent. And hence it is that, while the prosperous are ready to forget the duty of charity, they very often display a generous and liberal disposition. This can be exercised without subjecting them to the hearing of those painful details, and the seeing of those wretched scenes, and also without forc-

ing upon their minds those serious thoughts which often accompany the exercise of charity. And, by a strange perverseness, only to be accounted for by that dislike which prosperity induces to the contemplation of misery, and the solemn views which it inspires, they bestow their favours where they are least wanted, heap them in useless profusion upon those who are already bending beneath the gifts of fortune, and ‘give their sum of more to that which has enough.’ But this is not charity. Before true charity can be exercised, real misery, actual want, must exist—must be contemplated with seriousness and a desire to relieve it. Now, there is something in prosperity which unfits and indisposes men for doing so ; while there is everything in affliction to prepare and qualify them for it. It entenders their heart, and makes them more susceptible of serious impressions, more alive to cases of misery, and more ready to relieve them. Objects of distress, whom, in the days of their prosperity, they overlooked, now attract their attention and excite their compassion. Opportunities of being charitable multiply upon their hands ; the miserable thicken around them. Not that there is an actual increase of wretchedness—of this there is always enough in the world—but they have become quicker in discerning, and more disposed to relieve it. Charity is a plant which grows native in the human heart, but its growth is checked by the pleasures of the world, and it can only be restored to health and vigour by affliction. And surely,

when we see it springing up, in balmy luxuriance, in a heart which was bare as the desert, or insensible as the storm which sweeps its surface, and shedding its refreshing odours on all around, we cannot but regard the process which brought it forth as beneficial, and the person who has been the subject of it, as happy. Now, he who has suffered, or who is suffering himself, will ever be the readiest to feel and to relieve the necessities of others. That crust of insensibility and indifference with which the world and its pursuits, prosperity and its pleasures, envelope the heart, is broken by the throes which it is made to experience, and the lost sympathies of nature are restored and improved. With his prosperity, it is true, a man may lose the means of performing extraordinary acts of beneficence ; but he very often acquires a quick and generous regard to the lesser wants of others, and a skill and success in administering to them, which is not less useful, and certainly not less deserving of praise. Much of the happiness of human life depends upon a tenderness of spirit, a gentleness of disposition, which education labours in vain to counterfeit or to produce, but which is the genuine and easy offspring of sanctified affliction. And much of human misery shrinks from the obtrusive hand of public charity, and refuses to be comforted, by the studied consolations of friends, while it drinks in, with greediness, that balm, which can be poured into its wounds, only by one, who has been afflicted. There are secrets of sympathy,



which can be learned, only in the school of affliction. The heart-strings which have been struck themselves, vibrate with sweetest concord to the notes of woe. He who has felt the sounds of consolation, making their way to his own afflicted heart, is most likely to possess that ardent, yet patient, sympathy, which can combat the fears, bear with the murmurs, soothe the sorrows, and rouse the sinking spirits of the wretched. The widowed heart best knows how to sympathize with the bereaved husband; and he who has tasted all the bitterness of death, in the loss of his own children, is best qualified to sit by the side of him, who is mourning for an only son, and drop, into his ear, those words of consolation and of hope, which came with healing efficacy to his own afflicted soul.

This tendency of affliction, to produce sympathy towards others, and especially towards those who are visited with adversity resembling our own, is frequently recognised in Scripture. ‘You shall not oppress a stranger,’ said Moses to the Israelites, ‘for you know the heart of a stranger, as you yourselves were strangers in the land of Egypt.’ ‘Remember those who are in bonds,’ saith an apostle, ‘as being yourselves bound with them, and those who suffer adversity, as being also in the body.’ And to encourage us to trust in Him, who is appointed our Advocate and Intercessor, the sacred writers frequently remind us, that He hath borne our nature and its infirmities, that He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; that He

was even tempted like as we are, yet without sin, and is able and willing to succour us when we are tempted, and to console us when we are sorrowful. Seeing then we have such an High Priest, it becomes us to hold fast the profession of our faith, and to come boldly to the throne of mercy, that we may find grace to help us in every time of need.

V. *Adversity is calculated to correct and purify the moral conduct.*

History is full of the pernicious effects of long continued prosperity ; and whether we look to nations or to individuals, we shall find that the period of their greatest exaltation has seldom been the period of their greatest virtue or activity ; but that success has encouraged them to adhere, with inflated obstinacy, even to admitted abuse, and to repose, with sullen indifference, in the midst of acknowledged iniquity. On the contrary, adversity rouses them from their indolence, and quickens and restores them to their dignity, by correcting their errors. The principle upon which it operates may be said, in some measure, to extend to inanimate nature. Through all its departments, rest is productive of bad effects, and agitation and change are appointed, by its benevolent Author, to correct the evils thus accumulated, and to restore the offending elements to wonted use. He sets the wind in motion to purify the stagnant atmosphere, and swells the billows of the sea, to prevent it from putrefying, and

spreading disease and death. It is with the same benevolent intention, and often with the same salutary effect, that affliction is sent to correct the festering vices, and purify the latent virtues, of the heart. Men would grow familiar with sin, and lose all sense of its evil, if they were not made to feel some of its penal effects. And it is well that it consists with the views of the Moral Governor of the universe, to give them warning. For although all the severity with which God visits iniquity, and all the pains which He attaches to the practice of sin, cannot, in every case, prevent the wicked from giving themselves up to work wickedness, yet His visitations render the unrestrained and determined transgression of His law less frequent, and check, in their career, many whom uninterrupted prosperity would have plunged into the very depths of vice, and who would choose iniquity rather than affliction. ‘Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backsliding shall reprove thee,’ says the prophet, to the house of Judah. A man is not so likely to run into his wicked courses, when he has been made to see the danger, and to pay the penalty, of them. He asks himself, ‘What fruit had I, in those things, whereof I am now ashamed?’ And, under the smart or apprehension of the punishment, which he finds to be their bitter effect, he begins to part with his vicious habits. Hence saith the Apostle Peter (1 Pet. iv. 1), ‘He that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sin.’ Having experienced, in some measure, and anticipated,

in a greater, the consequences of vice, he begins to put away from him the accursed and accursing thing. He keeps at a more awful distance from sin, and looks upon it as that which God hates and punishes. He acknowledges, with a mixture of resolution and regret, 'I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more.' What, all the arguments of reason—what, all the remonstrances of his friends—what, neither the still voice of conscience, nor its loudest alarms, could accomplish, has been brought about by affliction. The serious impression, and the reforming purpose, may not follow, it is true, in every case of affliction; and even when they do, they may be effaced by the flow of returning health, or defeated by the seductions of renewed prosperity. But this only tends to show, in a stronger light, the use, the necessity, of affliction to correct the levity and wickedness of the human heart. There is much mercy in the declaration, 'I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.' The condition of man would have been still more wretched, had he been left to the uncontrolled influence of a mind, unable to direct him in the path of duty, and yet ready to accuse his transgressions. Hence, the prophet teaches, even to pray for correction, saying, 'Correct me, O Lord! but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nought.' And he assigns as a reason, for this seemingly unnatural petition, 'because it is not in man to direct his steps.' We need the illuminating and



quickening influence of affliction to guide us in the path of duty. It is amidst scenes of difficulty, that the human mind acquires much of its energy, and the human character, almost all its excellence. Hear the account which the prophet gives, of the continuance and inveteracy of the guilt of Moab. 'Moab hath been at ease from his youth, he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel—neither hath he gone into captivity; therefore his taste remaineth in him, and his scent is not changed.' In coming through fiery trials—in undergoing severe affliction—a man loses the vices<sup>1</sup> which adhered to, and disgraced, him. 'And thus is his iniquity purged, and his sin taken away.' 'Behold, I have refined thee,' says God to the house of Jacob, 'I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.' 'Before I was afflicted,' said the Psalmist, 'I went astray; but now, O Lord, I have kept Thy word.'

<sup>1</sup> Methinks! if ye would know,

How visitations of calamity

Affect the pious soul, 'tis shown ye here!

Look yonder at that cloud, which, through the sky,

Sailing alone doth cross, in her career,

The rolling moon! I watched it as it came

And deemed the bright opaque would blot her beams;

But melting like a wreath of snow, it hangs

In folds of wavy silver round, and clothes

The orb with richer beauties than her own;

Then passing, leaves her in her light serene.

SOUTHEY'S *Roderick*, Sect. 21.

VI. *Adversity is calculated to wean from the love of life.*

It has been thought that, if their life were much longer, men would grow tired of it; or, at least, if they did not come positively to dislike existence, might get indifferent about its continuance. General observation and experience, however, are against this opinion. Indeed, there is an excess of feeling the other way. Men see and acknowledge that there is much uneasiness and much misery in the world. But they also find, that there is a great deal of what appears to them true happiness and enjoyment. They are too high, rather than too low, in their estimate of human life. They are too much pleased with the things which it affords—too much disposed to prefer them to the hope of higher objects; and the error which is most to be guarded against is, not dissatisfaction with the miseries of the world—although of this also there may be melancholy examples—but that of taking up with its pleasures. Men, in general, are too full of the sufficiency of riches, too proud of the value of honour, and they need more warning of their uncertainty and emptiness than their ordinary experience and reflection can furnish. When they meet with no disappointment in their ambitious views, no interruption to their worldly pursuits, they go on with increased activity and increasing attachment. When their exertions are crowned with success, they cry out, with exulting confidence, It is

good for us to be here ; and, in the enjoyment of their prosperity, are ready to forget the great end of their being and the high hopes set before them, and to sink their interest in eternity amidst the trifles of a day. But when men would thus sit down contented with the meaner blessings of earth, affliction says to them, Arise, depart, for this is not your rest. It teaches them the vanity of those things which they were so eagerly pursuing, how little they are suited to the capacities of an immortal being, and how unworthy the conduct to which the eager pursuit of them leads. It lifts them above the dust, in which they were burying their affections, instructs them in the knowledge of true happiness, and carries them, from the lost or exhausted joys of earth, to those fountains of felicity which are never drawn dry, and which are perfect as they are permanent. It reduces them, perhaps, to a state in which their former employments can yield them no delight, and the things in which they trusted can afford them no relief—when riches, which they so eagerly coveted, can furnish only a recollection of the struggles, it may be, the crimes, by which they were obtained—when pleasure, which they so pertinaciously followed, can present only the languors by which their delusive efforts are succeeded. Their desires are moderated, and their views spiritualized ; and, whereas, they were formerly affected only by feelings that were gross and earthly, they are now become capable of more exalted sentiments, alive to more ele-

vating prospects. They turn from the unsatisfying vanities of time and sense to the unseen realities of religion and eternity ; and, fixing a purified and steadfast eye on the great end of their existence, they become dead to the world, forget its perplexing cares and delusive joys, or remember them only to give ardour and intensity to the desire so beautifully expressed in Scripture, ‘ O that I had wings like a dove, that I might flee away and be at rest.’

Men, no doubt, are warned all along, by the voice of religion, to consider themselves as pilgrims and strangers upon earth, and to study to pass through this life unencumbered with its cares, unseduced by its allurements, and prepared for a better. But they too often neglect this admonition—

‘ They give to time eternity’s regard,  
And, dreaming, take their passage for their port.’

They look upon this world as their home, engage with avidity in its business, plunge without reflection into its pleasures, connect themselves too closely with the objects around them, become actors where they should only have been spectators, and taste of joys which were never designed for them—the very principle of which is excess, and the very essence transgression. So that, when the hour of their departure comes, it finds them, instead of being prepared, bound to the earth by innumerable ties, and starting back from the prospect of futurity with apprehension and dislike. Even they who have set their supreme affections on



things above, and whose attachment to this world is neither criminal nor inordinate, feel reluctant to part with objects to which they have been long accustomed, and to which they are bound by many pleasing sympathies and virtuous recollections; and, without renouncing their higher hopes, cling to the scenes of their imperfect enjoyments with a fondness which, if not altogether innocent, is extremely natural. But God sends afflictions, as He sent His angels, to loose the fetters of His servants who were in prison. He makes men let go by degrees their hold of the world, causeth their mirth to cease, hedges up their way with thorns, and makes a wall so that they cannot find their paths; reduces them in their fortune, or smites them in their person, and carries them, under a load of sickness, from scenes which they have no longer the power nor the desire of enjoying, into the chamber of death, where except the sighs of their sorrowing friends, there is nothing to remind them of existence, nothing but the recollection of their errors, to make them regret its termination.

## CHAPTER IX.

OF THE HEREDITARY PRINCIPLE IN MORAL  
GOVERNMENT.

THE sanction of the second commandment of the Divine law runs thus (Ex. xx. 5), 'For I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments.' We learn, from the history of the people to whom this sanction was specially addressed, that the carrying out of it, in the course of His dealings with them, gave rise in their minds to dark and injurious views of the government of God. In the Book of Lamentations (chap. v. 7), they are represented as complaining. 'Our fathers have sinned and are not, and we have borne their iniquities.' Indeed, the complaint had become so common, that it had assumed the form of a proverb. And, as if the complaint had not been altogether

without ground, the Lord is introduced by the prophet Jeremiah (ch. xxxi. 29) as saying, in reference to some coming measures of his administration towards them, 'In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' The emphasis with which, in many passages of Scripture, death is denounced against<sup>1</sup> the soul that sinneth, intimates not merely the certainty that sin shall be punished, but also that it shall be punished in the person, rather than in the posterity, of him that committed it. And the question put to our Saviour (John ix. 1) concerning the man born blind, whether his blindness was not the punishment of some sin on the part of his parents, indicated the belief of the Jews that God still continued to visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children. Indeed, it is plain to all who carefully observe the course of Providence, that the hereditary principle is still acted upon in God's moral government of the world. And many have found great difficulty in reconciling such a principle with a belief in His wisdom and goodness, His holiness and justice. It may be proper, therefore, to inquire—

## SECTION I.

I. How, and how far, this principle is carried out, in the ordinary arrangements of Providence ; in what

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxii. 14. Exod. xii. 15. Lev. xvii. 10 ; xx. 6 ; xxii. 3. Num. xv. 31, etc.

sense, and to what extent, the children may bear the iniquities of their fathers.

Now, there are two ways in which men may be penally affected, by the iniquities of their predecessors or fathers. They may suffer, 1, as the members of a society, or 2, as the individuals of a race.

1. Consider men as members of a society, and it will be seen that, in this capacity, they may be penally affected by the iniquities of their predecessors or fathers.

By living in a state of society, men are put, in a great variety of ways, under the influence of the conduct of one another. But the difficulty to be obviated leads only to the consideration of that influence, which is exerted in a hereditary way—by fathers upon the children, by ancestors upon their successors.

Now, in this view, it is obvious to remark, that the great framework of civilised society is very often a thing of inheritance. The human plant, so to speak, does not grow up in its wild luxuriance and unassisted strength, but is trained against the walls and espaliers of law and government, and pruned by the hand of public customs and manners. Men, when they are born into this world, are not permitted to chuse whether they shall be ruled as the members of a monarchy or of a republic. The point has been settled by their fathers. The laws and regulations by which the business of their life is to be governed, are ready made, handed down to them, perhaps, through a long succes-



sion of ancestors. Now, in as far as the laws and regulations of the society in which they are born are imperfect or unjust, the children may suffer through the fault of their fathers. They may suffer, too, in a way which it may be impossible, or at least difficult, for them to prevent or remedy. The imperfect or unjust arrangements from which they suffer, may be interwoven with others which are wise and good ; they may form part of a system which, upon the whole, is beneficial, and, rather than run any risk of impeding or changing the general result, they find it prudent to put up with a few inconveniences, and to bear the political iniquities of their fathers.

The moral conduct, too, of one generation may materially affect the character and the happiness of their posterity, considered as a body. The apostle (Tit. i. 12) quotes (from Epimenides) a proverb, which seems to have been in common use, against the Cretans, viz., that they were always liars. Now, the Cretans must have been sensible of the distinction between truth and falsehood, as well as other nations. There was nothing in the soil or the atmosphere of their island to make them lie. It is situated in a fair enough latitude. But, because, at some period and in some instances, they had proved deceitful, they were always suspected, the quarrel was kept up against them, and the sins of the fathers fell upon the children, even when they spoke in simplicity and sincerity. Other examples of national vices and national reproaches might easily be men-

tioned. Now, in these cases, the children, no doubt, may sometimes follow the sin of their fathers, but, even when they forsake it, they do not escape from reproach. The treachery or violence which was committed by one generation settles down into a lasting stigma and suspicion upon their posterity. And, what is more, the generation that sinned may reap the harvest of their sin, in as far as sin can be said to have a harvest, and die before the sharp winter of retribution sets in—they may carry off the golden wages of their iniquity, and leave the heavy reckoning of punishment to be cleared by their successors. A people, by breaking their engagements, may sometimes obtain a present or seeming advantage, and before the insulted nations discover the wrong, the generation who wronged them, are not, and their vengeance falls upon their unoffending posterity. Public profligacy takes a time to produce its baleful effects, and the men who have ruined a nation's virtue and a nation's peace, are sometimes carried away before the full evil and enormity of their conduct can appear. You may raise and insult their bones, or execrate their memory, but you cannot touch themselves. They weaken the foundations, and the temple falls upon the guiltless heads of their descendants. There was a famine, in the days of David, three years, year after year (2 Sam. xxi.); and, when David inquired of the Lord the reason of this grievous calamity, he was answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house. Saul was long since dead, but the land

was not yet purified from the blood which he had spilled. And, to prevent his subjects from imitating the disobedience and cruelty of their prince, God saw fit to visit them with heavy and continued judgments. In like manner, at the time alluded to, in the Lamentations of Jeremiah (chap. v. 7), the Jews were groaning under captivity; but the sins by which that calamity had been brought upon them, were committed, not by the generation to which the prophet belonged, but by a generation who were not; yet the bitter effects of their apostacy and wickedness continued and descended—the children walked in captivity, because the fathers had walked in sin, and the poisonous tree, which darkened and defiled the land of Israel, derived its baleful luxuriance from the reposing ashes of those whose folly had given it root.

And, not only may children share in the punishments which are sent upon the sins of their fathers, but the punishment which comes upon their own sins, may be greater, in consequence of the sins of those who went before them. When nations become corrupt and vicious, God frequently exercises patience towards them, to see if His goodness may lead them to repentance. He forbears to execute the fierceness of His anger, and does not punish the first offenders, that the succeeding generation may abandon the vices of their predecessors. But, if they go on in wickedness, then it becomes high time for God to lift Himself up, and to vindicate the purity and justice of His

government. Now, in such cases, if the generation who suffer had been the first offenders, they might have been spared for the same reason that their fathers are supposed to have been spared, viz., to declare the patience and goodness of God. But now God has sufficiently exercised His long-suffering towards them, and it becomes proper for Him to arise and punish their crimes, and to show that He judgeth in the earth, and is Governor among the nations. And thus, the reason why they are punished may be said to be—not because they are wicked, but because they are the wicked descendants of wicked predecessors. If the generation before them had not sinned so grievously, they might have been spared, as examples of God's mercy; but because this mercy had been shown and despised, it cannot be continued. They are punished, no doubt, for their own sins, but they also bear the iniquities of those who went before them. The wrath which had been heaped up falls upon them. The vials of the Divine indignation, which had been filling, their wickedness has caused to overflow, in fuller measure, upon themselves. For, when God begins, He also makes an end, and pours into the guilty bosoms of the impenitent children the judgments which were due to the wickedness of their fathers. Hence we read, in Scripture, that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, who perished between the altar



and the temple, was required of the generation who persecuted and condemned the Saviour. God had sent unto their fathers prophets and preachers of righteousness, rising up early and sending them. And, although they treated the messengers of His will with contempt and cruelty, He continued to treat them with forbearance and kindness. As the last and best expression of His love, the Great Master of the vineyard sent unto these ungrateful husbandmen, saying, 'Peradventure they will reverence My Son.' But when they, with wicked hands, had crucified and slain the Son of God, He visited them with judgments—not greater than their sin—but judgments, which He Himself hath said, were aggravated by the sins of their fathers.

2. And if, from considering men as members of a society, we come, 2, to consider them as constituting a race, it will be seen that, in this view also, the children are liable to bear the iniquities of their fathers.

The individuals who are born into this world are not every one created, as the first man was, by a distinct exertion of Divine power. As, of the green leaves on a thick tree, some rise and some fall, so are the generations of flesh and blood. Men succeed one another, or, in other words, they are members of a race. They receive their life in the way of inheritance or descent, and thus the children, in many respects, may bear the iniquities of their fathers. By intemperance and neglect, men may not only hurt their own health, but lay up years of watching and sickness for their family—

may not only break down the sound and vigorous constitution which originally belonged to them, but may transmit debility and disease to their posterity. By idleness and prodigality, men may not only bring themselves to want, but may entail poverty upon their descendants. They may deprive their family, by their iniquities, of what the law of nature and of nations would have secured to them, or leave them groaning under a burden of debt. Men may scourge and deface, by their extravagance, the unpurchased estate, which came to them from their fathers, and which ought to have gone down uninjured to their posterity. If their iniquities are not exhausted, or if their hands are not tied, they may make away with it altogether, and send out into the highways and waste places of the world, those who, but for their sins, would have sat down in a fair and sheltered heritage, and amidst a kind and respectful neighbourhood.

But there are judgments more severe than the want of health or of riches, which may come upon the children in consequence of the iniquities of their fathers. 'A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.' Now, when men sin and bring themselves to shame, those who are connected with them bear a part in this shame. The world is very jealous upon this point, and visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, even unto the third and fourth generation. Kings, also, take to themselves a little too much, per-

haps, of the majesty of heaven. Even the posterity of those who touch the Lord's anointed are pronounced infamous. Treason, though it runs not, is punished in the blood. The family of traitors are shorn of their titles and blotted in their escutcheons, and many a noble heart has been bowed and broken by the perfidy of their fathers. But (not to mind these high things), if we look around us in the world, we may see the fact alluded to occurring in every condition of life. The children of those who have sinned, not only bear the shame and the poverty which follow from their fathers' vices, but they do not get the credit and the benefit of the virtues which they themselves may exercise. It is much more difficult for them to make their way in the world than if they had been born of reputable parents.

But if the children of those who sin may be said to bear the iniquities of their fathers, inasmuch as they share in their shame, much more may it be said, when it is considered that they may also share in their sin. The children of the wicked are not so likely to be virtuous and happy in the world, as if they had been descended from righteous parents. 'The seed of evil-doers,' saith the prophet, 'shall never be renowned.' It is not meant that the children of wicked or infamous parents are necessarily wicked and infamous; but, when it is considered, that they are members of a race, and that a tendency to some vices, just like a tendency to some diseases, may be transmitted; when it is considered that they must take the first and most important part

of their education—the education of infancy and childhood—the education which goes on before we think of schools or schoolmasters at all—from those who gave them birth, it is possible that they may also share their vices. If they see and forsake their father's sin, so much the better. If they enter upon the path of piety and virtue, this is better still; but yet, that path will be more difficult than if they had been taught, by pious parents, to tread in it, from their infancy upwards—if their baptism had been, indeed, the grace of regeneration, and they had entered into the kingdom of heaven when they were little children.

These remarks may serve to show, that the fact complained of is not of rare, but to a certain extent, of frequent and ordinary occurrence. For, whether men be considered, as the members of a society, or the individuals of a race, the fathers may sin and the children bear their iniquities.

The first thing to be stated, in alleviation of the apparent harshness of this arrangement is, that God not only causes the memory of the wicked to rot, but blesses the memory of the just, not only allows children to bear the iniquities of their fathers, but also, and, by the same arrangement, to reap the fruit of their labours and virtues.

Many of the advantages which men enjoy as members of civil society, are obtained by no diligence or exertion upon their part, but descend to them through the patriotism and integrity of some preceding genera-



tion, and are continued, even when they have become altogether insensible and unworthy of them. Long after Abraham was laid in the cave of Macpelah, God remembered the covenant which He had made with him, and relieved his distressed posterity. Hence it was that the Jews boasted so much of having Abraham to their father. The name of David also was a strong tower to his people. It averted the punishment of their sins, and called down upon them many blessings. 'For the sake of My servant David,' was a frequent and powerful plea with God. The glory did not depart from Israel till after their religion and virtue were gone. A long twilight of peace lingered upon the mountains of Zion. And, in like manner, even at this day, we frequently see nations maintaining their credit and their power, when the virtue and the men who created them are not. We are apt to complain of the iniquity and hardship of some of those laws which were enacted by our ancestors; but we ought not to forget, that to them also we owe much of the security and freedom which we enjoy. And many of our privileges, if they were still to assert, would not be asserted without a struggle.

What is said of political advantages will apply to other advantages, which belong to men as members of society. Much of the knowledge, of which we make a boast and a show, was acquired by our predecessors. If every successive generation were compelled to begin anew the path of science, men could never have risen

above a state of barbarism. This is exactly the case of the inferior animals. They have no means of transmitting knowledge, or of improving their condition. Every succeeding generation begin and end where the generation before them began and ended, and their manners and habits are the same now as when they were first created. The ants are as wise as they were in the days of Solomon, but no wiser. But man has been enabled gradually to alter and improve his condition. He has availed himself of the labours of his ancestors. He has been permitted to deck himself out in the spoils of antiquity. The discoveries and improvements of former generations have descended in rich inheritance upon their posterity; and, instead of being compelled to earn their intellectual food by painful and precarious struggles, the children have been admitted at once into the well-stored garner of the fathers. The stock of knowledge has gradually accumulated. Much has been lost, but much has been saved. The wisdom of Egypt, in which Moses was so learned, is gone, beyond recovery. But the labours of Greece and Rome are at our command. And the means of knowledge and improvement are so easy and so abundant, that the men of the present generation, though, like the lilies of the field, they neither toil nor spin, are arrayed in a style of intellectual splendour and beauty, to which all their industry could not have led, without the legacy bequeathed by their fathers.

The same thing may be said of the more private advantages of men. The grandeur and the wealth of families come down to them very often from the prudence and the valour of their ancestors. Those rich and fair possessions, which raise their masters to an equality with princes, are seldom acquired during one generation. The strong castles, which overlook a whole neighbourhood, are generally the work of several hands. The proud escutcheons, of which many boast, are too rich in honour to be gained by a single arm. And, in short, many of those things which are highly esteemed among men, are conveyed to them by their predecessors. In the government of God, one thing is thus set over against another. And the children have no right to complain, that they bear, in some measure, the sins of their fathers, when, by the same arrangement, they are also permitted to reap the fruit of their labours. The truth is, it is not possible to conceive how men could exist as a society, or a race, without being mutually and materially affected by the conduct of one another.

What goes still further to lessen the apparent harshness of this arrangement is the remark, that what comes upon men, through the conduct of their predecessors, does not affect them so much as what comes upon them from their own actions.

It is a misfortune, no doubt, for one who might have been the heir of great possessions, to come into the world in circumstances of depression or poverty,

through the folly and extravagance of his predecessors. But the feelings of a man who has been disinherited from his birth, are not to be compared, in their bitterness, to the feelings of the man who has beggared himself. The sweat that breaks upon the brow of him who labours for his daily bread, is healthful, when compared with the deeper curse of him who has wasted his substance in riotous living. It must be painful,—the more pure and generous the mind, the more painful it must be,—for a man to be reminded, by the distrust and aversion of the world, that he derives his birth from one who had forfeited his honour and his life, and shares his blood with the stream which flowed on the scaffold, or which has been declared to be attainted. Yet even this feeling, bitter though it be, is not like the agony of the father who has sinned and suffered, and caused his son to bear his iniquity. There is a resistance or elasticity in the human mind which lightens or throws off the load which it did not contract. The heart does not sicken till we strike it with our own hand. The spirit will sustain us till it be wounded by our own iniquity.

On the other hand, the advantages which men obtain by inheritance, are not reckoned so valuable as those which they acquire by their own exertions. Wealth, it is true, will bring its comforts, whether it be inherited or acquired. Gold has its lustre and its value, come how it may. Men seldom look into the hand which holds it out, though it may be sullied by



dishonesty or spotted with blood. Cæsar's image and superscription, like charity, can cover a multitude of sins. But, what makes God's ways equal is, that the advantages which wealth confers, are not so fully felt by the man who merely opens his arms to receive them, as by the man who has been diligent and enterprising, and who has obtained affluence and ease by his prudence and activity. The Israelites loathed the manna which they had only to go out and gather, and were willing to exchange their idle abundance for the hard tasks and scanty returns of Egyptian bondage. What is easily come by is but lightly valued. There is a glow of excitement and satisfaction pervading the whole frame of him who wins his way to independence and comfort, that can never be experienced by the man who sets himself languidly down in the easy and well-lined chair of his ancestors. Titles of honour have been highly valued and eagerly sought. But, when these descend by inheritance, they must lose much of their true charms and value to the possessor.<sup>1</sup> He may have the attitude and the look of his station, his vanity may be flattered by its trappings, or his indolence may be gratified by its immunities, but his eye can never glisten, his heart can never heave, with the pure and lofty feelings of the man who, born, like

1 . . . . 'Honours best thrive  
When rather from our acts we them derive,  
Than our foregoers.'

—SHAKESPEARE,

Melchisedec, without descent, became strong in righteousness, and used that virtuous violence which the kingdom of heaven delights to suffer, and which even the honours of the world are sometimes compelled to tolerate. Among the most valuable of a man's earthly possessions are the respect and esteem and kindness of those around him ; but these are not so valuable to the son, who receives them in consequence of the buried merits of his father, as to the man who bears his living claims about with him. Indeed, the feelings of one whose way through life has been cut and carpetted by the talents and virtues of his predecessors, are no more to be compared with the feelings of the man who presses his well-won way to honour and respect, no more than the sickly and tended movements of him who walks upon crutches, can be compared with the healthful activity of the strong man, who rejoices, like the sun, to run his easy and brilliant career. There are smooth and gentle currents which intersect this worldly sea, yet they who are cast, like bread upon the waters, they who battle with the proudest billows and the darkest storms of adversity, have often more health and happiness than those who languish and sicken, while waiting for the trade-winds of patronage and prosperity. There are blanks and prizes, so to speak, in the lottery of life, but these are not decisive, either of our present happiness or misery. One man comes into the world with the scarlet thread of primogeniture and preferment around his wrist, while another is born

to be the servant of servants—one is the heir of affluence and honour, is cradled in purple, has music to soothe him, and coronets for toys—while another derives nothing from his progenitors but poverty and shame. Yet, mark the wisdom and goodness of God—amidst all the diversities of the human condition, the means of happiness are very equally distributed. The good and evil which come upon us, as the members of a society or the individuals of a race, lose much of their power by the very mode in which they come; and the arrangement complained of, which is perhaps inseparable from our nature and our condition, is made in a great measure to check itself.

Having seen in what sense, and to what extent, the iniquities of the fathers may be visited upon the children, it remains to show—

## SECTION II.

The wise and good ends answered by this arrangement, and how it is favourable to virtue and moral government in the world.

Now, this arrangement will be seen to be compatible with the wisdom and goodness of God, and conducive to the carrying forward of moral government, whether the principle upon which the arrangement proceeds, or the reflex operation which it has, be considered.

1. Consider the principle upon which this arrangement proceeds, and it will be seen to be favourable to the interests of virtue and moral government.

When a people are subjected to suspicion and reproach, on account of the treachery and injustice of their ancestors, or when one generation are applauded and trusted, on account of the fidelity and virtue of their predecessors, reference is evidently made to the power of habit and the influence of imitation. It is supposed, and very reasonably supposed, that the nation which has once broken its public faith, is liable to do so again ; while the nation which has hitherto kept its honour inviolate, will be confirmed in its integrity. It is the same in the case of individuals. The suspicion or stigma which attaches to the son of a wicked father, is founded, in as far as it does not spring from his own wickedness, on the impression that one who has been so much exposed to the influence of a bad example may not be altogether free from the contagion. And the esteem or kindness which is felt towards the son of a virtuous father, proceeds, in as far as it is not excited by his own virtues, upon the belief that one who has had so good an example constantly and closely before him, must, in some measure, have benefitted by it. Now, it is plain that, though, in particular cases, these views may be wrong, though it be possible for men to enjoy a good example without benefitting by it, and to be exposed to the influence of a bad example without imitating it ; yet still the principle upon which



we thus judge favourably of some, and unfavourably of others, is well founded, and the judgments which it leads us to make are quite consistent with the plan of God's moral government, since they go directly to encourage virtue and to discourage vice.

The principle, it is true, is liable to be carried too far, and the judgments formed upon it may be too severe. On the one hand, there are some who keep up their resentment and suspicion too long. They are rigid in their temper, and are unwilling to let the children break out from the accursing entail in which they have been involved. They wish literally to enforce the sanction of the second commandment, and to visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the sons, even to the third and fourth generations. They are not easily satisfied with proofs of integrity and virtue in the children, but wish to lengthen the period of their purification and trial, and to hold over their heads the bill of moral attainder which was passed against their fathers. Now, the Scripture hath said, that, 'if a son see his father sin, and consider and do not such like, he shall not die for the iniquity of his father: he shall surely live.' And, though the suspicion and reproach which are attached to the descendants of wicked parents, proceed upon a principle which is in itself right, and, in its operation, favourable to moral government, yet it ought not to be carried too far. The first appearances of virtue should be favourably regarded—the breaking up of the family compact to do

evil should be encouraged—the deserters from the camp of sin should be welcomed—the standing order of society should be relaxed in their favour—the faintest breath of spiritual life should be fanned and cherished—and the children who refuse to walk in the wicked ways of their fathers should be received ‘as life from the dead.’

On the other hand, there are some who go to the other extreme—who look with undue partiality upon the children for the sake of their fathers. They seem to believe in the doctrine of nativities, and prophesy good of every one who is born when his house is in the ascendant. In the likeness of those who were distinguished for their talents or esteemed for their virtues, they are willing to see the promise of every future excellence. They are apt to substitute a good lineage for great qualifications, and seem to fancy that virtue is a thing of family. They forget that a man cannot bequeath his talents and integrity—that intellectual qualities and habits cannot be transmitted by law—that children must come to their fathers’ virtues, if they come to them at all, by imitation and not by inheritance; for the mantle of many an ascending saint and hero has fallen upon recreant and degenerate shoulders, and the ‘rich blood which fired the veins of kings’ has never wakened one virtuous or lofty pulse in their ignoble posterity. In addition to the principles and feelings which keep men in the path of integrity and honour, they who share their blood with the great,

have the pride of rank to guarantee the propriety of their conduct. Yet, in the absence of every other, this must be but a feeble tie; in their presence, it may be unnecessary. Nothing should be trusted to its single strength. It is ruinous to the interests of society, and contrary to the intentions of Providence, to make descent take the place of merit. And, if anything but oppression should make a wise man mad, it is the spectacle of one who is conscious, and almost boastful, of his incapacity, jostling out the humble but well prepared aspirants to honour and trust, and saying to them, with bitter insult, ‘Stand back (not because I am holier than thou art, that is not the plea, but) because I am better born than thou art.’

But, notwithstanding the abuse that may be made of it, let it be remembered that the arrangement alluded to, of children suffering through the fault of their parents, or receiving the reward of their virtues, is an arrangement which proceeds upon a principle which is in itself right and favourable to moral government.

2. Consider the reflex operation of this principle, and of the arrangement which is founded on it, and it will be seen that it is highly useful to the interests of religion and virtue.

On the one hand, it must be a great encouragement to parents to persevere in the paths of piety and virtue, when they find that, by doing so, they are not only promoting their own peace, but are laying up an in-

heritance of blessing for those in whom they are most tenderly interested. God may be eager to bless them and call them to their reward before their family can have become ripe for glory. And how cheering must be the reflection of the righteous, that, not only is their path bright before them, but that there is a train of light and blessing behind them—that they do not expire like a wasted taper, in darkness and offensiveness—but go down, like the sun, in mellow beauty—that their example and their name will be a rich inheritance to their children—that the favour and kindness which they were always ready to show, will be rendered back to their orphan family—and that, when *their* hearts forget to beat, a thousand bosoms will glow with fatherly affection towards the beings for whom they would almost wish to tread the earth again.

On the other hand, when men see the effects of imprudence and vice descending beyond those who are immediately guilty, it must operate as a powerful admonition and restraint. And, even supposing the fathers to have sinned and ceased to be, and thus prevented from reforming their conduct; yet still, other parents may take warning, and beware of bringing themselves and their posterity within the reach of this penal arrangement. There can be no doubt that one great end of God's permitting children to bear the iniquities of their fathers is to form an additional check upon the commission of sin. There are multitudes who can listen, without concern, to the most fearful



denunciations against themselves, yet who are touched to the quick by everything which affects their posterity. So long as the matter involves themselves only, they can remain careless and indifferent; but show them that they are injuring their offspring, and they are roused and startled. There are some who are so subject to their passions, that they disregard almost everything that stands in the way of their gratification. Yet they will check or retrace their career, when they come to see that they are trampling in the dust all the hopes and advantages of a rising family. There are many who would willingly launch out for a time into the wide sea of splendour and indulgence, though their after life should be bound in the shoals of poverty and depression; but they cannot bear the thought of making their tender offspring share in their privations and hardships. There are multitudes who take the most hazardous chance for themselves, and yet choose the safest for their children. It is a strange exhibition of human nature, but by no means rare, to meet with persons who are themselves utterly indifferent and regardless about everything which concerns religion, yet who do not wish their children to be so. They have spent their whole life in utter neglect of those things which accompany salvation, but they do not wish their family to do so. You may try in vain to move them from their indifference, or to rouse them to a personal concern about these matters; they will die in their sins. Their part is taken, and they mean to stand by it.

But they begin to suspect that the issue is against them, and therefore they do not wish their children to follow them. Thus it happens, that, when all the better principles and feelings of the heart are weakened and perverted, by the practice of sin, the paternal affections remain entire ; and the dying father, who has never set his foot within the walls of a church, will tell his children not to forsake the worship and the fear of God ; while he whose whole life has been one fitful delirium of intoxication, will shake his palsied head, and exhort young men to be sober and temperate. As the ruins of a fallen temple were said sometimes to re-echo to the voice of its former oracle, so, even from amidst the darkness and desolation which sin spreads over the human heart, the words of truth may come. But, if this arrangement did not exist, this restraint or corrective could not operate ; if children were not liable to suffer through the fault and example of their parents, this barrier against the encroachments of sin would be broken down, and men might pursue their evil course without let or hinderance. Say not, therefore, that the ways of God are unequal, but say rather, that the ways of men are unequal, who acknowledge the odious nature of vice, and will not flee from it, till they be made to feel its baneful effects ; who see the heavenly origin of virtue, and yet need earthly ties to bind them to the practice of it ; who live amidst the promises and threatenings of a just and gracious Providence, yet refuse to hearken to them, and, instead of

keeping the commandments of God, that it may be well with them, and with their children after them, sin and cease to be, and cause their posterity to bear their iniquities—eat the sour grape, and cause the children's teeth to be set on edge.

Should these remarks tend, in any degree, to vindicate the wisdom and the goodness of God, one very important point is gained. But they serve also to clear the way for understanding and receiving one of the most fundamental and peculiar of the doctrines of revelation—the doctrine of original sin—or, to speak more properly, of hereditary depravity. Indeed, it will generally be found, that right views of the character and government of God are not only of the utmost importance in themselves, but derive additional value from leading to the knowledge and belief of the truths declared in Scripture. By some, indeed, all such preparative reasonings have been discarded as worse than useless. They think that the discoveries of revelation have no affinity with the conclusions of natural theology, and are for pressing at once into the Holy of Holies, without standing at all in this outer court of the Gentiles. Now, it would be wrong, certainly, to quarrel with any one who can give a reason of the faith that is in him, merely because that reason is not the one which satisfied us. The Sun of Righteousness, like the sun in the firmament, may be seen the same from different points. If a man once stedfastly set his face towards Zion, there are more

ways than one by which he may reach it. The movements of the mind are not to be regulated, like the march of any army, by the notes of a trumpet. Yet, perhaps, it may be said, that the shortest and surest path to the fountain is, to follow up the stream. By taking across the fields, a man may think to save himself trouble; yet, in his haste, he may sit down by some tributary rill, and think that he has found the living source. But let religion begin where, or how it may; let its first note be struck on the ascending or descending scale, its work is not completed till it regulate and purify the whole heart and life. Let the Gospel come to a man in powerful demonstration, and solve to him all the difficulties of Providence as easy and subordinate corollaries, or let him, from the marks of Wisdom and Goodness, which appear in the works of creation and providence—let him, from these, as from so many axioms or data, rise to the truth of the proposition, that God hath given us eternal life through His Son—it matters not. If these two elements be combined, Christian faith is formed. But let it not be said that there is no affinity betwixt them—let it not be said, that the God who rules in the high places of revelation, is not also powerful in the humble vale of ordinary life. The plan of Providence, and the scheme of Redemption, are but parts of one mighty whole. They are different pieces of work by the same great Artist. The one fits in, so to speak, with the other. They give and receive mutual aid



and support. Indeed there is not, in the well furnished armoury of the Christian, a more powerful weapon than the argument from analogy. It is at once a shield and a sword, and may serve to subdue the adversary, and to strengthen the believer.

Should any one, for example, in the pride and deceitfulness of his heart, take offence at the doctrine of original sin, and say that it is too absurd to be thought of, that God would never suffer the children to bear the iniquities of their first father, we have only to bid him open his eyes, for he cannot look around him in the world, without seeing examples of the operation of the hereditary principle, of families and individuals suffering through the fault of their predecessors. So that the doctrine, so far from being in itself absurd and incredible, is very much supported by observation and experience. If it be asked, how it can be reconciled to the wisdom and goodness of God, it may be sufficient to point to the moral purposes which we see resulting from the arrangement, as it operates in the ordinary events of Providence, and to reply, that greater glory to God, and greater good to man, may accrue from the present constitution of things, than from any other. As to the question of strict justice, it can have no place. God cannot be unjust to man. Injustice is the withholding of what is due. But nothing was due to us from God. We had no claim upon Him. When Adam sinned, his posterity were not. They are exposed, through his

sin, to sufferings, from which they would have otherwise been free; but, with all the sufferings to which they are exposed, life is still a blessing. It would have been a greater, without the penalty of death; but that penalty is of man's incurring. Adam was made in the image of God. But, when he sinned, the children that were born to him, were born after his own image. And they must either have been born so, or not born at all. It is difficult to conceive how Adam could have sinned, without affecting his posterity. He was the first of a race. Human nature was shut up in him. In him, it was injured, and it must either have died in him, or been continued under that sin to which he had subjected it. 'He, being the stock or root of all mankind, the same death in sin, which he had contracted, was conveyed to his posterity.' Instead of interfering to prevent this, God thought it more conducive to the glory of His character, and the happiness of His creatures, that is, more in accordance with moral government, to provide a remedy for the evil. The cure, too, comes in the same way as the disease. They are different operations of the same principle. The one is exactly the counterpart of the other. And what clears the justice of God in making the children of Adam bear the iniquity of their father, is the provision which He hath made for their restoration to perfect happiness and eternal life. The fact, that in Adam all died, should always be viewed in connection with another

—in Christ shall all be made alive. Our bane and antidote are both before us. As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For, as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so, by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. And, where sin abounded, grace hath much more abounded. The Saviour hath not only delivered us from the bondage of death, to which we became subject, through the transgression of Adam, but He hath prepared for us a happiness in heaven, far beyond what we should have enjoyed in paradise, though our first father had never sinned. He came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. He is the Resurrection and the Life, and whosoever believeth on Him, though he die, he shall live again; and live, not amidst the sufferings and temptations of a life like the present, but amidst the happiness and glory of heaven. Let us see, therefore, that we believe on Him who is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. 'He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not, shall be damned;' yea, he that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him. We are born under the sentence of death. We bear about with us in our mortal bodies the

iniquities of our first father. And it is only by believing on the second Adam, who is Christ the Lord, that we can be quickened to righteousness and glory. He that hath the Son hath life, but he that hath not the Son hath not life. Awake, therefore, ye that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light. From the death of the grave we must arise. The sin of Adam sends us down, and the power of Christ shall bring us up. We must needs die, and we must needs rise again. Our pleasure was not consulted in the ministration of death, and neither will our leave be asked in the dispensation of life. All the dust that ever breathed, must breathe again. God knows the number of the dead. The sound of the last trumpet shall penetrate all the caverns of the grave. The sea shall give up the dead that are in it, and the earth shall deliver up the dead that are in it. All the generations of Adam shall be gathered together at the bar of judgment. And whether we shall be made subject to the second death, or exalted to eternal life, depends, in so far, upon ourselves. ‘If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap. He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. But he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.’ All that are in their graves shall come forth; they that have done



good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of condemnation. In that day, they shall say no more; ‘The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge. But every man shall die for his own iniquity. God will render unto every man according to his works. To all who, by a patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, He will give eternal life. But to them who are contentious, and obey not the truth, He will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil.”

THE END.







